

# Eugene Onegin

Alexander Pushkin

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*Pétri de vanité, il avait encore plus de cette espèce d'orgueil qui fait avouer avec la même indifférence les bonnes comme les mauvaises actions, suite d'un sentiment de supériorité, peut-être imaginaire.*

(Tiré d'une lettre particulière)

*Formed by vanity, he possessed still more of that species of pride that leads one to confess to good and evil actions with a like indifference, due to a sense of superiority which is perhaps merely imagined.*

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## **Dedication**

To Peter Alexandrovich Pletnev

Indifferent to the world's delight  
Seeking the pleasure of my friends  
I only wish the words I write  
Might have been turned to better ends –  
Reflecting you, your noble dreams,  
Your spirit's true simplicity  
Lines more worthy of such themes,  
Of your sublime clear poetry.  
Such as they are, view these extremes  
These varied chapters in your hand,  
With fond indulgence; witty, tragic,  
The casual, the idealistic,  
The fruit of carefree hours, unplanned,  
Insomnia, pale inspiration,  
Unripe powers, or fading art,  
The intellect's cold observation,  
The bitter record of the heart.

## **Chapter One**

*И жить торопится и чувствовать спешит.*

*Rushes to live, and makes haste to feel.*

Prince Vyazemsky

1

‘My uncle, what a worthy man,  
Falling ill like that, and dying;  
It summons up respect, one can  
Admire it, as if he were trying.  
Let us all follow his example!  
But, God, what tedium to sample  
That sitting by the bed all day,  
All night, barely a foot away!  
And the hypocrisy, demeaning,  
Of cosseting one who’s half alive;  
Puffing the pillows, you contrive  
To bring his medicine unsmiling,  
Thinking with a mournful sigh,  
“Why the devil can’t you die?”’

2.

Such our young dog's meditation,  
As his horses plough the dust,  
Inheriting, as sole relation,  
By the will of Zeus the Just.  
Friends of Ruslan and Ludmila,  
Here without an ounce of bother,  
Meet my hero of romance,  
Before you, let him now advance.  
Eugene Onegin, born and raised  
There beside the Neva's shore,  
Where you too were nourished or  
Found your fame, perhaps amazed,  
There I too strolled to and fro:  
Though the North affects me so.

3.

His father had a fine career  
And gladly lived a life of debt  
Always gave three balls a year  
And died with all he owed unmet.  
But Fate took Eugene by the hand  
First *Madame*, you understand,  
Then *Monsieur* taught the child  
A pleasant-natured lad but wild.  
*Monsieur L'Abbé*, French and thin,  
Spared the lad from weary lessons,  
Ducked the moralizing sermons,  
Taught him everything by whim,  
A mild rebuke, a sharp remark,  
Then off to ramble in the park.

4.

Now, when Eugene reached the age  
Of restless youth's tumultuous passion,  
Those years of hope and tender rage,  
*Monsieur* was packed off in brisk fashion,  
And my Eugene was free at last,  
A London *dandy* safely classed  
His hair cut neatly a la mode,  
Into society he rode.  
French he spoke and wrote with ease,  
Danced the mazurka deftly too,  
Bowed to each acquaintance new,  
Did all that was required to please.  
What more is needed? All agreed  
That here was wit and charm indeed.

5.

We've all acquired some education  
A bit of this a bit of that,  
God be thanked, some imitation,  
And we can all display éclat,  
Onegin, he was deemed by many  
(Critics stern, acute as any)  
As well-read, but opinionated,  
For conversation's art created.  
He had the gift of easy chatter,  
Touching lightly on each theme,  
Then like a very sage could seem  
When talk was of some graver matter,  
Yet make the ladies smile, un-clam  
With some ready epigram.

6.

Latin's not in fashion now,  
Truth to tell, his knowledge slight,  
He knew enough I would allow  
To read an epigraph, and might  
Mention Juvenal by the way,  
Or end a letter with *vale*,  
And knew by heart, or thought he did,  
Two whole lines of the Aeneid.  
As for finding ancient treasure  
He'd no desire to dig the dust  
Of history all turned to rust,  
But kept the juiciest stories ever  
From Romulus to our own day,  
In his memory tucked away.

7.

He lacked the passion and desire  
To give his life for poetry,  
Despite all efforts, or aspire  
To tell iambic from trochee.  
Bored by Theocritus and Homer,  
Adam Smith was more his tome, where  
Deep in all things economic  
The wealth of nations was his topic;  
On what the state relies, he told,  
Of how it lives, the what and why  
With staple products its supply,  
No need to keep reserves of gold.  
Left his father, stunned by theory,  
Of mortgaging his land quite weary.

8.

The wealth of things my Yevgeny  
Mastered I've no time to tell,  
But as for genius, if any,  
One thing alone he studied well,  
His springtime occupation bright,  
His labour, torment and delight,  
That occupied each night and day,  
And kept dull boredom far away –  
The science of the tender passion  
The one poor Ovid used to sing,  
And, exiled for that very thing  
Plus another hidden reason,  
Ended on the Black Sea shore,  
Far from Italy's allure.

9/10.

From the first, he'd spread confusion,  
Conceal his hopes, feign jealousy,  
Gain trust, or cause pure disillusion,  
Seem to pine, be sad or gloomy,  
Sometimes proud, sometimes humble,  
All attentive, or just mumble!  
How languid was his reticence,  
How passionate his eloquence,  
How swift his letters from the heart!  
Breathing one thing, loving one thing,  
How utterly himself forgetting!  
His glance now bold, with tender art,  
Roguish, coy, or see appear,  
Glistening, an obedient tear!

11.

How skilfully he'd feign the new,  
And daze the eyes of innocence,  
Or frighten with a glance or two  
Of despair, burn flattery's incense,  
Catch the first flush of emotion,  
Overcome with wit and passion,  
Ingenuous naivety,  
Await the touch, involuntary,  
Beseech, elicit true confession,  
Listen for the heart's first cry,  
Pursue love wholly, and thereby  
Secure a secret assignation,  
Then later, intimacies meeting,  
Silently impart love's teaching!

12.

Though young he learnt the way to stir  
The heart of a confirmed coquette!  
And when he wanted to refer  
To his rivals, that whole set,  
How poisonous the words he used!  
What traps he set for those abused!  
But you, the men in wedded bliss,  
Were ever dearest friends of his,  
The careful spouse as much his man,  
Betrayed, a husband from a novel,  
As some suspicious aged devil,  
Or cuckold, foolish, of that clan  
Content forever with their life,  
Their dinner-table and their wife.

13-15.

So, often, while he's still abed,  
Three notes appear, on a tray.  
What? Invitations? Swiftly read,  
Three houses offer a soirée:  
A birthday party, here a ball.  
Where will my young idler call?  
Which to visit first? No matter,  
He'll have time still for the latter.  
Meanwhile in his morning dress  
Complete with wide-brimmed Bolivar,  
He saunters on the Boulevard,  
Parading there with all the rest,  
Until his Breguet's sleepless chime  
Tells him, now is dinner-time.

16.

As it grows dusk he takes a sleigh:  
'Clear the road!' loud sings the cry,  
His beaver-collar shines away,  
Frost's silver powders on it lie.  
He's off to Talon's, calculating  
His friend Kaverin will be waiting.  
He arrives, the cork pops, heaven!  
The Comet's vintage, year eleven.  
A roast-beef, rare, adorns the table,  
And truffles, luxuries of youth,  
The French cuisine's finest proof,  
And Strasbourg pies, renowned in fable;  
Limburger cheese, soft and pungent,  
The pineapple's pure golden unguent.

17.

Glass on glass to drench the heat  
Of that last cutlet's fiery fat,  
As his watch's chimes repeat  
The ballet's beat he should be at.  
This ruthless critic, legislator,  
The artiste's flatterer and traitor,  
To all unfaithful by and by,  
Denizen of the wings, he'll fly  
Onegin, to the theatre where  
He breathes the air of freedom, at  
An instant hails the *entrechat*,  
Boos Cleopatra, hisses Phaedra,  
Or shouts for his Moina, merely  
In order to be heard more clearly.

18.

Land of bewitchment! In past times  
Satire's most audacious master,  
Fonvizin shone there, Freedom's lover,  
And Knyazhnin's imitative rhymes.  
Ozerov's tragedies for years  
Won tributes of spontaneous tears,  
Shared wild applause, with Semyonova,  
And our Katenin moreover  
Translated the sublime Corneille,  
Shakhovskoy, so sardonically,  
Produced his hive of comedy,  
There Didelot too crowned his day,  
Where, in the shadow of the wings,  
My youth fled by, enchantment clings.

19.

My goddesses! Where? Where are you?  
Listen now to my sad voice.  
Are you as you were? Have new  
Idols replaced you, a worse choice?  
Do I hear once more your choir sing?  
See a Russian Terpsichore wing  
Her way again in soulful flight?  
Or must my dull gaze fail to light  
On any fond face on this stage,  
Turning on the alien mass  
My disenchanted opera-glass,  
Tired of the laughter of the age,  
Silently to yawn and sigh  
For all those years long sped by?

20.

The theatre fills, the boxes glisten,  
The orchestra, the stalls, they seethe,  
The circle claps to make all happen,  
The rustling curtain as we breathe  
Soars, glistening half-ethereal,  
To the magic bow in thrall,  
A host of nymphs around her, so  
Istomina stands, serious  
One foot planted, pirouettes  
Takes a leap and, like down, sets  
Off as if blown by Aeolus,  
Twists her waist one way, another,  
Spins, beats one foot on the other.

21.

Vast applause. Onegin enters,  
Threads the rows among the feet,  
Askance his opera-glass now centres  
On unknown faces, ranked, complete.  
He notes the boxes, serried places,  
Sees it all; the fashions, faces,  
Fill him with dissatisfaction,  
Bows to friends, then views the action,  
Turns on the stage indifferent eyes,  
Within its glow no interest dawns,  
Then he turns away – and yawns,  
‘They’re all past they’re best’ he sighs;  
‘What do I haunt the ballet for?  
Didelot too is quite the bore.’

22.

Then come Cupid, imp and snake,  
Treading the boards interminably,  
While weary servants half-awake,  
Doze on the fur coats in the lobby,  
The audience, their feet still tapping,  
Sniffing, coughing, hissing, clapping.  
While both indoors and outside  
Lanterns glitter far and wide,  
The carriage horses, chilly, wait,  
Their harness chafing, restlessly,  
The coachmen by the fire free  
Their absent masters to berate.  
But our Onegin’s off to roam,  
Borne away to change at home.

23.

That dressing room, all solitary,  
Shall I depict with faithful pen  
Where fashion's loyal devotee  
Is dressed, undressed and dressed again?  
All that, to sate boundless caprice,  
Ingenious London without cease  
Sends us through the Baltic trade,  
For timber and tallow, quickly paid,  
And everything Parisian taste,  
The useful arts, can devise,  
That fashion or luxury supplies,  
For idleness and sense to waste –  
All in our sage's cell appears  
Our philosopher of eighteen years.

24.

A pipe of amber from Istanbul,  
China and bronzes fill the table,  
And to delight the sensual  
Perfumes in finely-crafted crystal;  
Steel combs, files in various guises,  
Brushes of thirty different sizes,  
For teeth or nails, both are served,  
Scissors with straight blades and curved.  
Rousseau (I mention it by the way)  
Could not conceive how haughty Grimm  
Dared clean his nails in front of him,  
Eccentric, eloquent, at bay!  
Freedom's champion, ever strong  
In human rights, was here all wrong.

25.

No reason why a man of energy  
Should disregard the subject of his nails;  
Why quarrel with the age fruitlessly?  
Custom is a tyrant, and prevails.  
A second Chadayev, my Yevgeny,  
Fearing all the barbs of envy,  
Was a very dandy in his dress,  
A pedant in the details, no less.  
A full three hours at least he'd spend  
Before the mirror, then would leave  
His dressing room, I'll not deceive,  
Like Venus if she'd descend  
In masculine attire displayed  
To enter on the masquerade.

26.

Garbed to the modern taste,  
You're curious for every detail,  
And for you, knowledgeable race,  
I might try to tell the whole tale,  
But there's a risk in such fiction,  
Though I'm an adept at description,  
No Russian terms exist, confess,  
For *trousers*, *dress-coat*, or for *vest*;  
As it is, I ask forgiveness,  
My style is rendered quite absurd  
Too often by a foreign word,  
It's peppered with them to excess,  
Though I've consulted frequently  
The Academic Dictionary.

27.

That's not the business we've in hand,  
Better to hurry to the ball,  
Since with a cab hired from the stand,  
Onegin has outpaced us all.  
Along the rows of darkened houses,  
Down the streets where evening drowses,  
The twin lights of the carriage throw  
A rainbow glitter on the snow.  
Oil-lamps bright on window sills,  
The sumptuous mansion gleams,  
While behind the window streams  
A flow of silhouetted stills,  
Heads, in profile, edges crop,  
Of lovely woman, freakish fop.

28.

Past the doorman like an arrow,  
Through the hall, our hero's there,  
Soaring up the marble stair now,  
With a hand he smoothes his hair,  
Enters. The room is gyring,  
Orchestra already tiring,  
A mazurka holds the crowd;  
The crush intense, the noise is loud.  
A Horse Guard's spurs go jingling,  
The light-footed girls sweep by,  
As ardent glances swiftly fly  
In pursuit, the dancers mingling;  
While drowned by frantic violins  
The jealous ladies whisper sins.

29.

In days of dream and ardour,  
The dance-floor was my passion:  
The safest place for a lover  
To pass a note of assignation.  
Oh you, esteemed husbands, now  
My services to you I vow!  
Pay attention now I beg you,  
From my words take warning due,  
You mothers, hear me too, I bid,  
Guard your daughters most severely,  
Raise your lorgnettes, watch them closely,  
Or else.....or else, may God forbid!  
I dare to write about it so,  
For I stopped sinning long ago.

30.

Alas, on every stray amusement  
I've wasted far too many hours,  
Yet were they wholly innocent  
I'd still wander those bright bowers.  
I love youth's frantic energy,  
The crush, the lights, the gaiety,  
The girls in fashionable dress,  
I love their little feet, confess  
That, search all Russia though,  
You'll not find three lovely pair.  
Ah, they made me long despair  
Two slender feet...Now sad and cold  
I still remember, and it seems  
They yet can thrill me in my dreams.

31.

But where, in what deserted strand  
Madman, could your heart forget?  
Ah, little feet where do you stand?  
On what spring flowers are you set?  
Pampered in eastern luxury  
On our northern snows, so gloomy,  
You left no trace, but loved instead  
The sensual touch, on rugs to tread  
And carpeted voluptuousness.  
The call of fame, praise, I forgot,  
My country: exile was my lot,  
Was it for you all that distress?  
So youth's happiness must pass,  
Brief as your footprints on the grass.

32.

Diana's breast or Flora's cheek,  
Are enchanting, friends, I find!  
Yet Terpsichore's foot I'd seek  
Far more enchanting, to my mind.  
Since, foretelling to my gaze  
Pleasure in a thousand ways,  
Its subtle beauty lights the fires  
Of a swarm of sweet desires.  
Such I adore, my dear Elvina,  
Beneath the table's damask gloss,  
In the springtime on the moss,  
In winter, resting on the fender,  
Or on the ballroom's gleaming floor,  
Or the granite of the shore.

33.

Recall the sea before a storm,  
How I envied the waves then,  
Each falling there as they form  
To lie at her feet, in peace again!  
How I longed to be those seas  
Kissing her dear feet as they please!  
No, never in the fiercest fires  
Of tortured youth and its desires  
Did I so long with painful ardour  
To kiss the young Armida's lips,  
The roses of her burning cheeks,  
Or her breast, filled with languor;  
No, passion took no greater toll,  
Nor ever so consumed my soul!

34.

Another day I bring to mind!  
Sometimes in my fondest dreams  
I hold that stirrup, blessed by time,  
The little foot I touch it seems;  
Again imagination blazes,  
Again, a simple touch amazes,  
Stirs blood inside my weary heart,  
Again the pain, again love's art!  
Enough of praise though for the proud,  
Enough of my loquacious lyre,  
They're never worth the singer's fire,  
My songs inspired by that crowd.  
Their words, their looks, both are sweet,  
Yet prove as faithless....as their feet.

35.

And my Onegin? Half-asleep  
He flees the ball, and finds his bed,  
But Petersburg that restless heap  
Its drum pounds fit to wake the dead.  
The merchant and the beggar rise,  
To his stand the cabman drives,  
The milkmaids from Ochta go  
Crunching over morning snow.  
The city's sounds swiftly wake her,  
Shutters part, chimneys smoke,  
Blue columns rising over folk,  
The punctilious German baker,  
More than once in white night-cap  
Has opened up his serving flap.

36.

Worn out by the ballroom's noise  
And turning morning into night  
Sleeps peacefully in blissful joy  
The child of luxury and delight.  
He wakes at noon, or even later,  
His life till dawn the same as ever,  
Monotonous and varied, say,  
Tomorrow just like yesterday.  
But was dear Yevgeny content  
Free, and in the flower of youth,  
Midst glittering victories, in truth,  
Midst oft repeated amusement?  
Was he as vigorous and carefree  
As at the feast he seemed to be?

37.

No, for his early feelings faded,  
Exhausted by society,  
Not for long were lovely ladies  
The object of his constancy;  
Faithlessness was not amusing  
Friends and friendship were confusing,  
Since even he at times would sigh  
At more *beefsteak* and Strasbourg pie  
Endless bottles of sparkling wine  
And fail to offer a word, to make  
A bon mot, with a fierce headache,  
And though a womaniser fine,  
In the end he too grew bored  
With duelling, pistols, and the sword.

38.

The sickness, with which he was smitten,  
The cause of which it's time to seek,  
That *spleen* (so Englishmen are bitten)  
Or *chondria*, when we Russians speak,  
Had gradually overwhelmed him,  
Thank God no desire claimed him,  
To blow his brains out, as we're told,  
Yet his life grew sad and cold.  
Like *Childe Harold*, mournful, dour,  
He'd wander through a drawing room,  
No gossip could dispel his gloom,  
Cards, or glance, or sweet sigh's power,  
Nothing touched his feelings there,  
He noticed nothing, did not care.

39-42.

You were the first, capricious belles,  
He would neglect and then abandon.  
Today we know, truth to tell  
The crushing boredom of *bon ton*.  
Though it's true some woman may  
Talk of Bentham and of Say,  
Generally their conversation  
Though innocent tries one's patience.  
Besides they are so pure, so pious,  
So clever, and so circumspect,  
So blameless in their intellect,  
So inflexible, so virtuous,  
So unapproachable, serene,  
Their very presence causes spleen.

43.

You too, sweet girls, who late at night,  
When all of Petersburg's abed,  
The speeding cabs whirl out of sight  
Over the darkened stones instead,  
You too Yevgeny quite deserted.  
From every pleasure he retreated,  
Onegin, shut himself indoors,  
Would join the literary bores,  
Tried to write, it makes him ill  
All serious effort – no words flow,  
He yawned inordinately, and so  
Failed to join the shameless guild,  
Of Writers: whom I cannot blame  
Since, I'm one too and just the same.

44.

As emptiness possessed his soul,  
Once more resigned to being idle  
He chose – a more than worthy goal,  
The thoughts of other men to rifle;  
Great shelves of books he read and read  
But still found nothing in his head,  
All's tedium, madness, and pretence  
Here no conscience, there no sense,  
All chained to their pre-conception,  
The old ones utterly out-dated,  
The new ones simply antiquated,  
Like women, books proved a deception,  
Across the literary stack,  
He drew a mourning veil of black.

45.

I too cast off the social burden,  
At that time, and retired from view,  
I made a friend of Eugene then.  
I liked his face, his manner too,  
Liked his dreamy tendency,  
His unique eccentricity,  
His mind, incisive, and chilly;  
I was bitter, he was gloomy.  
Both had known the play of passion  
Both had wearied of the game,  
In both our hearts a dying flame,  
Both had known Fate's passing fashion,  
All mankind's malicious ways  
In the morning of our days.

46.

He who's lived, he who's thought  
Cannot but despise it all,  
He who feels, is quickly taught  
The pain of time lost, past recall:  
Enchantment fails such men as he,  
Bitten by the snake, Memory,  
Absorbed by remorse at things done  
Though it adds to conversation,  
Lends it charm, intense delight.  
I thought Onegin's talk disturbing  
But later found it re-assuring,  
His virulence, his scorn, alight  
With witticisms forged with guile,  
His epigrams topped up with bile.

47.

How often, on a summer's night,  
The sky aglow above the Neva,  
With that pale diaphanous light,  
Where no face showed of Diana  
In the water's smooth still glass,  
Recalling romance of time past,  
Recalling many a lost love there  
Sentimental, free from care,  
In silent joy, of night's bounteous  
Benediction we drank deep!  
Like prisoners released in sleep,  
To roam the forests green, so us,  
Carried in dream to that land where  
All life, before us, seemed so fair.

48.

His heart consumed with regret  
Leaning, musing pensively,  
On the granite parapet,  
As Muraviev, our Yevgeny.  
All is still, only the guards  
Call to each other in the yards,  
Or far sounds rise, as wheels meet  
The cobbles of Milyona Street.  
A single boat with outspread oars  
Swims across the drowsy stream,  
A horn rings out, enchanted dream,  
A distant strand of singing soars;  
Yet Tasso's murmured octaves are  
Sweeter, in night's embrace, by far.

49.

Waves of the distant Adriatic,  
Oh Brenta! No: yet I'll rejoice  
When inspired again, ecstatic,  
I hear the magic of your voice!  
Sacred to scions of Apollo,  
Albion's proud lyre I follow,  
To know its beauty, be its friend.  
Where Italy's gold nights descend,  
I'll breathe free, take my ease  
Float in a gondola's embrace,  
With some fair Venetian face,  
Silent, chattering, as you please,  
My lips from hers will softly prove  
The tongue of Petrarch and of love.

50.

When shall I ever loose my tether?  
Now! Now! With joy, I call aloud,  
I pace the shore, wait for fair weather,  
Signal each passing sail, each shroud.  
When, storm-wrapped, shall I be free  
To fight the waves, and scour the sea,  
When will my wings begin to soar?  
It's time to leave this tedious shore,  
This hostile climate where I wander,  
And with southern oceans nigh  
Roam beneath my African sky,  
To mourn there for gloomy Russia,  
Where I've loved, where I've suffered,  
Where my heart has long been smothered.

51.

Onegin and I planned to travel,  
To feast our eyes on foreign lands,  
But soon we saw our plans unravel,  
Our fates lay in Fortune's hands.  
Then his father passed away,  
And creditors had him at bay,  
Each man to his own ideas,  
He with lawyers round his ears,  
Hating all this litigation,  
Content with life, took a stance,  
Relinquished his inheritance,  
Finding it small deprivation,  
Or else, reviewing distantly,  
His uncle's frail mortality.

52.

In fact he soon received a letter  
From his uncle's man, to say  
His uncle lay at death's door, better  
Say farewell without delay.  
Yevgeny read the gloomy note,  
Then grasped the instant by the throat,  
Took to the road, went post-haste,  
Yawning the while as he raced,  
Prepared, for the sake of gold,  
For boredom, and hypocrisy,  
(The place where we began, you see)  
Yet he arrived, his uncle cold,  
The corpse on a table laid,  
Nature's debt already paid.

53.

The house was filled with commotion,  
Friends and enemies from afar  
Had called to show their true devotion,  
Or enjoy the funeral, as you are.  
The dead man buried priest and guests  
Did full justice to the rest,  
Ate, drank, then left, solemnly  
Pleased that they had done their duty.  
Now our Eugene's a countryman,  
With vineyard, water, wood, and field,  
He who had never once concealed  
His wastefulness and lack of plan.  
Glad now that his former ways  
Were changing with the passing days.

54.

For two days it was all quite new,  
The solitariness of the meadow,  
The coolness of the dark glades too,  
The babbling brook, the silent furrow,  
By the third, field, wood, and hill,  
No longer even stirred his will,  
He even felt the urge to yawn,  
He saw as clear as the dawn,  
The country caused the same ennui  
Despite the lack of streets and yards,  
Of dances, poetry, and cards,  
While disillusion dogged him constantly,  
Pursued him endlessly through life,  
Like a shadow, or a wife.

55.

I was born for quiet existence  
For rural silence, where the lyre  
Sounds more sweetly in the silence,  
And spirit finds creative fire.  
In ease and innocence I take  
A walk beside the lonely lake,  
And *far niente* is my law.  
Every dawn produces more  
Dear liberty and leisure.  
I read a lot, I doze a little,  
Careless of fame, the brittle.  
Was it not, with such pure pleasure,  
In happiness, in idle ways,  
I once spent my sweetest days?

56.

Flowers, love, fields, and idleness,  
O country life! I like you all,  
Pleased as I always am to stress,  
That Onegin is not me, recall  
It, lest some sly, caustic reader,  
Some tell-tale, or vile inventor  
Of over-elaborate slander try  
To pair Yevgeny and I,  
And ignominiously repeat  
That I have here daubed my portrait,  
Like Byron, pride's perfect poet,  
As though we can never treat  
Of someone other, never own  
To any but ourselves alone.

57.

All poets, it seems to me,  
Love in imagination,  
To dream affection constantly  
Was once my sole preoccupation.  
My soul preserved its memory  
The Muse gave it eternity,  
And so in careless rapture I  
Sang the maid on mountain high,  
And captive girls by the Salgira,  
But now my friends I often hear,  
Your question ringing in my ear,  
‘Whom does your sweet lyre hold dearer?  
For whom among that jealous crowd,  
Do you now voice your thoughts aloud?

58.

‘Whose glance, creating inspiration,  
Rewards with its fond caress  
Your pure, pensive incantation?  
Who in your verse is your goddess?  
No one, my friends, I tell you, truly!  
Love’s madness, wild and unruly,  
I suffered without hope or joy.  
Happy is he who can employ  
Fevered rhyme on such a theme  
So he’ll double the intensity  
Of the sacred flames of poesy,  
Follow in Petrarch’s steps, seem  
To ease heart’s suffering, find fame:  
But I was mute, foolish in the game.

59.

Love faded *then* the Muse appeared,  
My darkened mind grew clear again,  
Now free, my verse no longer feared  
Music’s magic, thought, and pain.  
I write, my heart no longer suffers,  
My pen I find no longer wanders,  
Sketching women’s legs and feet,  
Beside some lines still incomplete.  
The cold ash hides no smouldering ember,  
I’m grieving still, but free of tears,  
The storm that shook my soul for years  
Soon, soon my mind will not remember:  
Then what an epic I’ll contrive,  
A poem in cantos, twenty-five!

60.

I've sketched the underlying plan,  
The hero's name I've given too;  
My rhyming novel's well in hand,  
I'm ready now for chapter two.  
I've scanned the pages of my fiction,  
And though they're filled with contradiction,  
It's not my job to work them through.  
The censors must have work to do.  
To journalists for their consumption  
I'll feed the proceeds of my pen.  
Go, little book: find Neva then,  
My newborn work, my sweet creation,  
Earn me the first fruits of fame,  
Noise, incomprehension, blame!

## **Chapter Two**

*O rus!*

**Horace**

*O, the country! O, Russia!*

1.

Our bored Yevgeny's place of leisure  
Was in fact a fine estate,  
Where lovers of life's simple pleasure  
Would thank the heavens for their fate.  
The manor house was quite secluded,  
Screened by the hills when storms intruded,  
Beside a river. On every side,  
Stretched the pastures far and wide,  
Golden cornfields, flowery meadows,  
Here a village, there another,  
Cattle grazing in the clover,  
Parkland, overgrown, soft shadows  
Deepening the garden's shade,  
Where the pensive dryads played.

2.

The stately pile was nobly planned  
As such fine mansions ought to be,  
Firmly founded on the land,  
With all the taste we used to see.  
Every salon high and handsome,  
Damask in the drawing-room,  
Ancestral portraits stretched for miles,  
Stoves shone with ceramic tiles.  
All this is out of fashion now,  
Though why it is, who can say,  
Yet none of it, the whole display  
Moved our hero, I'll allow,  
An ancient house or one new-born  
Both of them would make him yawn.

3.

In that room, where the aged fellow  
For forty years had berated  
His housekeeper, gazed out the window,  
Killed the flies, and rusticated,  
That simple stall, with oaken floors  
Settee and table, chests of drawers,  
And not the least ink-stain around,  
Onegin searched the cupboards, found  
In one a ledger taken hostage,  
In another home-made brandy,  
A stoneware jug of cider handy,  
An Almanack, of year eight vintage:  
The old man had no time to look  
At any more demanding book.

4.

Alone amongst his new possessions,  
Simply to pass the time away  
Yevgeny took, in dreamy sessions,  
To running things the modern way;  
A prophet in the wilderness,  
He scrapped the old *corvée*, no less,  
And substituted light quit-rent,  
The serfs applauded his intent.  
His calculating neighbour though,  
Was not enamoured, thought him mad  
Saw nothing good, predicted bad,  
While others sneered at the show,  
But one and all, in truth, agree  
He's a menace in the first degree.

5.

At first the neighbours visited,  
But as, at the back porch, was saddled  
His stallion, a Don thoroughbred,  
And he then rapidly skedaddled,  
Once he heard, near his abode,  
Their carriage wheels, briskly rode,  
They took offence, and once offended  
The brief acquaintances were ended.  
'The man's a lunatic, a boor,  
A mason, and forever drinking,  
Wine by the bottle, never blinking,  
Won't kiss the ladies' hands, what's more  
Says *yes* and *no*, but never *sir*  
Or *madam*' so they all concur.

6.

Meanwhile another landowner  
Newly arrived on his estate,  
His neighbour, caused an equal stir,  
For reasons that I'll indicate.  
Vladimir Lensky, is the man  
Handsome, young, a Kantian,  
Whose soul was formed in Göttingen,  
A friend of truth: a poet then.  
From misty Germany he brought  
The fruits of learning's golden tree,  
His fervent dreams of liberty,  
Ardent and eccentric thought,  
Eloquence to inspire the bolder,  
And dark hair hanging to his shoulder.

7.

Un-blighted by the world's cold malice,  
His generous spirit still could bless  
With warmth a comrade's manly kiss,  
Or a young girl's shy caress.  
At heart a simple innocent,  
To whom hope her brightness lent,  
In life's fresh glow, he still could find  
Enchantment, with an unspoiled mind.  
He sweetened with delightful dreams  
The doubts that stirred in his soul  
Life was a riddle, and its goal  
A puzzle that seduced, it seems.  
Over it he'd rack his brains,  
Seeking miracles, for his pains.

8.

In kindred souls too he believed,  
That somewhere there was another,  
Who longing to unite them, grieved  
For him alone, the eternal lover;  
Trusted also his friends were there  
Ready to save his honour, share  
His prison, loyal, prepared to fly  
To his defence should slander lie;  
That there existed chosen vessels,  
Holy friends of the human race  
Immortals clasped in fate's embrace,  
Who with radiant light would wrestle,  
One day, to illuminate and bless  
A future world with their caress.

9.

Compassion, and indignation,  
A pure devotion to the good  
The bitter-sweet lure of ambition,  
From the start, had fired his blood.  
The world he wandered with his lyre,  
Imbued with true poetic fire,  
Under Goethe's, Schiller's skies,  
They the masters, to his eyes.  
Blessed with skill, the Muses' art  
He never managed to disgrace,  
In his songs kept pride of place,  
For the passions of the heart;  
Moments of grave sublimity,  
The charms of sweet simplicity.

10.

He sang of love, to love subjected,  
Clear and serene his tune,  
As a girl's thoughts, unaffected,  
A child's slumber, or the moon,  
Sailing the untroubled skies,  
Queen of mysteries and sighs.  
He sang of parting and of sorrows,  
Misty climes, and vague tomorrows,  
Of roses in some high romance;  
Sang of all the far-off lands  
Where on quiet desert strands,  
His living tears obscured his glance;  
At eighteen years he had the power,  
To sing of life's dry withered flower.

11.

In that rural wilderness, Yevgeny  
Alone, to Lensky's taste inclined.  
The pleasures of the local gentry  
Not such as to engage his mind.  
The young man fled their noisy chatter,  
Their solid grasp of every matter,  
Concerning harvesting, or wine,  
Their family, or the hounds, no shine  
There of wit, true conversation,  
The glow of the poetic flame,  
No flavour of the social game,  
No sentiment to temper reason,  
While the babble of their wives,  
Was dross enough for many lives.

12.

Lensky, wealthy and good-looking,  
Was thought something of a catch;  
Thus the country view of hooking  
Any fish to make a match;  
Marry their daughter, was the plan,  
To this *half-Russian* gentleman.  
The talk turns with quiet persistence  
To a bachelor's sad existence,  
When he shows, with the samovar,  
And Dunya sits to pour the tea,  
Before, to prompt her minstrelsy,  
They bring on the poor child's guitar,  
And then she squeaks (Oh Lord, above!)  
'Come to my golden chamber, love!'

13.

But Lensky, lacking the desire  
To bear the marriage-yoke as yet,  
Wished sincerely to acquire  
Onegin's friendship, so they met.  
No two men were less the same  
Like stone and water, ice and flame,  
Prose and poetry, in intent.  
At first they seemed indifferent  
To each other, but liking grew,  
They rode together every day,  
Until, such good friends were they  
They were one instead of two.  
So people (I openly confess)  
Make friends, from sheer idleness.

14.

Friendship like that's to us unknown,  
Our minds are full of prejudice,  
We think the others noughts, alone  
Ourselves the integer in this.  
We all possess Napoleon's features;  
The millions of two-legged creatures  
Are only instruments and tools;  
Emotion's only fit for fools.  
Eugene more tolerant than most,  
Though he knew the human race,  
And as a rule despised each face,  
Yet (as all rules exceptions boast)  
Some he liked and placed apart,  
Valued feelings, with empty heart.

15.

He heard our Lensky with a smile,  
The poet's bold impassioned speech,  
His mind, still malleable the while,  
His gaze inspired: how he could preach! –  
All this fresh to Onegin, till  
The sarcastic and the chill  
Words upon his lips were still.  
He thought: what folly to work ill  
With such ephemeral happiness,  
Its doomed despite my interdiction,  
Let him but breathe the passing fiction,  
Believe all things are for the best:  
Youth is a fever, let's forgive  
Its madness and its rage to live.

16.

Between them every disputation  
Sparked a deeper train of thought,  
The histories of every nation,  
Good and evil, what science taught,  
The prejudices of the ages,  
The secrets of the grave, the pages  
Of life itself and destiny,  
Were all their constant study.  
The poet burning with opinion  
Recited, as in reverie,  
Bits of Northern poetry  
Yevgeny heard with condescension,  
Listening with tolerance,  
Though they seemed devoid of sense.

17.

But most of all they talked of passions,  
My two youthful hermits there;  
Having escaped those stormy regions  
Onegin spoke of them with care,  
Dispassionately gave a sigh;  
Happy the one who has passed by,  
Happier he who never knew them,  
Who has cooled love's agitation  
With parting, vengeance with a word,  
He who yawns away his life  
With his relations and his wife,  
Finding all jealousy absurd –  
Whose capital he's proved able  
To keep from the gambling table.

18.

When to the flag we have gathered  
Of rationality and peace,  
When passions' flames have wavered,  
When their unbridled stirrings cease,  
Their violence seems ridiculous  
And all their echoes false to us,  
We still tremble, being sober,  
To hear the tale told by another,  
The history of the passing gale,  
That even now can stir us so,  
Just as at wars of long ago  
The veteran is stirred, grows pale,  
And in his hut, with a will,  
Listens to the young bloods still.

19.

Besides, the enthusiasm of youth  
Could never yet conceal a thing,  
Love, or hate, it shouts the truth,  
Of every joy and suffering.  
Considering himself, so placed,  
As a veteran, solemn faced,  
Onegin heard the poet's confession.  
*He* gave heart and soul expression,  
Ingenuous, trusting, earnestly  
Telling the story of his ardour,  
His youthful love, warm and tender,  
Swiftly apprising Yevgeny  
Of all that sentimental stew  
That to us is nothing new.

20.

Oh, he had loved as in our age  
One loves no longer; one alone  
Possessed of the poet's finer rage,  
Is doomed to feel such love, and moan:  
Always the one pure constant dream,  
Ever desire's habitual stream,  
Ever habitual pain and grief,  
That distance, quencher of belief,  
Nor long years of separation,  
Nor hours given to the Muse,  
Nor foreign beauties, foreign views,  
Nor study, nor loud celebration,  
Could alter Lensky's loyal soul,  
His virgin fire a living coal.

21.

When but a boy his heart was captured,  
Never having felt love's blade,  
By Olga, and as one enraptured  
He watched her as she sang and played.  
Under the oak-trees' sheltering boughs,  
They exchanged their childish vows,  
Their fathers saw them marrying,  
Considered it a certain thing.  
Under her parent's gaze she grew  
Filled with grace and innocence,  
Humbly living out existence,  
A lily in the morning dew,  
A flower in deepest grass, alone,  
To bee and butterfly unknown.

22.

Olga was the first to stir  
In him the poet's exaltation,  
His first pipings were of her,  
Thoughts of her his inspiration.  
Oh, farewell now, the golden days!  
He sought the forest's shadowy ways,  
Solitude, silence, dark of night,  
And the moon's celestial light,  
The moon, a lamp in the sky,  
To which we dedicated then  
Our wanderings and again  
Our secret balm, a tear, a sigh...  
Yet now we only see in her  
A street-light, though inferior.

23.

Always humble, always truthful,  
Always smiling as the dawn,  
Like the poet's life as simple,  
Sweet as the kiss of love, that's born  
Of sky-blue eyes, a heavenly blue,  
Flaxen hair, all gleaming, too,  
Voice, manner, slender waist,  
Such was Olga...you can paste  
Her description here from any  
Novel that you choose to read,  
A charming portrait, yes, indeed,  
One I adored, but now it bores me.  
Reader, I'll enhance the vista,  
Let me describe her elder sister.

24.

Her sister's name was...Tatyana,  
Here's the first use of it made  
In romance, the first time ever  
It's been willingly displayed.  
Why not? It has a pleasant sound,  
Although inseparable I've found  
From memories of long ago,  
And the servants' quarters! No,  
It's true we don't possess good taste,  
In the names that we rehearse  
(To say nothing of our verse),  
Enlightenment has been a waste  
In our regard, has left us blessed  
By affectation – not the rest.

25.

So, she is called Tatyana.  
Not a beauty like her sister,  
Lacking rosy cheeks, the manner,  
To attract a passing lover.  
Melancholy, wild, retiring,  
Like a doe seen in a clearing,  
Fleeing at the sign of danger,  
To her family a stranger.  
She never took to caressing  
Her father, mother, not her way  
To delight in childish play,  
With the others, sweetly dancing.  
But often to the window glued  
She'd sit all day in solitude.

26.

Her dearest friend was reverie,  
From the cradle, the slow stream  
Of placid dull rusticity  
Enriched by meditative dream.  
Her tender fingers never held  
A needle, never once excelled,  
Her head above the silk inclined,  
In working something she'd designed.  
Early, the will to rule appears,  
The child with her obedient doll,  
Prepares herself for protocol,  
For social worlds beyond her years,  
Repeating to it solemnly  
What mother preaches constantly.

27.

But even in her earliest days  
Tatyana had no doll to nurse,  
News from town, the latest craze,  
She never chose to rehearse.  
Childhood mischief, petty glories  
Were not her *forte*; horror stories  
Were what gave her most delight,  
Told in winter, late at night.  
And when nurse had collected  
Olga's little friends to play,  
At tag in the meadows, say,  
Tatyana such things rejected;  
Their laughter noisy, tedious,  
Their raucous games so frivolous.

28.

On her balcony, alone,  
She loved to greet the break of day,  
When the light has barely shown,  
As the stars' choir fades away,  
And the edge of earth grows brightly,  
While, herald of the morning, lightly  
Stirs the breeze, brings on the morn,  
As the half-light turns to dawn.  
In winter when the shades of night  
Still hold half the world in thrall,  
And lost in misty moonlight all  
The East is indolently white,  
At the same hour's sweet caress,  
By candle-light she'd rise and dress.

29.

From the first she craved romances,  
Her great delight, she loved them so,  
Whatever chapter most entrances,  
In Richardson or in Rousseau.  
Her father saw no harm in reading,  
A decent sort, though yet conceding  
His taste was of a former age.  
And since he never read a page,  
He thought them quite innocuous,  
And never bothered for a moment  
About the volume's true content,  
That slept beneath her pillow thus.  
His wife was quite another one,  
Since she was mad for Richardson.

30.

Richardson she loved quite madly,  
Though not indeed that she was one,  
To read him, nor preferred really  
To his Lovelace, Grandison,  
But she had heard of them a dozen  
Times from her dear Moscow cousin,  
Long ago, Princess Alina,  
When, betrothed, she had seen her,  
Betrothed though against her will:  
She was sighing for another,  
Who pleased her very soul, a lover,  
Of whom she could not get her fill,  
*Her* Grandison, adept at cards,  
A dandy, ensign in the Guards.

31.

Like him she wore the latest fashion,  
Like him her dress was elegant.  
But regardless of such passion,  
They wed her, without her consent.  
Her prudent husband, swiftly left  
For his estate, where she, bereft,  
(Though he thought that country life  
Would soon settle his new wife)  
With God knows who for neighbour,  
Wept violently in her sorrow,  
Looked for a divorce tomorrow,  
Then plunged into domestic labour.  
Habit brought her quiet content,  
Habit joy's surrogate, heaven sent.

32.

Habit soothed her agony,  
Nothing else could end her grief,  
Until a fresh discovery  
Consoled her and brought relief.  
In their hours of work and leisure  
She quietly took her husband's measure,  
With that secret, gave her dictat,  
And ruled him like an autocrat.  
All went smoothly from that day,  
Pickled mushrooms for the winter,  
Kept the books, and shaved the hair  
Of levied serfs, bathed Saturday,  
Beat the servant girls and cursed,  
And never asked her husband first.

33.

Time was when she would write, *in blood*,  
In the album of some sweet friend,  
Call Praskovya, *Pauline*, and would  
Her sing-song voice in gossip blend,  
Pinched her waist with tight laces,  
Used the nasal ‘n’ in places  
Where French sounds were *de rigueur*,  
But in the end came to prefer  
Life without albums, waists, *Pauline*,  
Books of sentimental verse,  
All forgotten, and rehearse  
Names like Akulka, not Céline.  
And wore, her last defences down,  
A mob-cap and a quilted gown.

34.

Yet her spouse loved her dearly,  
Let her pursue her own sweet way,  
Trusted her himself, quite clearly,  
And dined with her *déshabillé*.  
Peacefully their lives progress,  
Sometimes they receive as guests,  
Some decent neighbouring family  
Plain, devoid of ceremony.  
They’ll grumble, swap the latest gossip,  
Laugh at whatever tickles them,  
Hours roll on, and then, again,  
Olga’s here with tea to sip,  
Then supper, bedtime, by and by,  
The hour when all must say goodbye.

35.

They held to, in their peaceful state,  
Traditions of the ages past,  
So on Shrove Tuesday always ate  
Russian pancakes, and they'd fast  
Twice a year, loved Christmas carols,  
Folksongs, and the wedding chorals,  
At Whitsuntide, their tears they'd shed  
On the flowers, their eyes quite red,  
When through the thanksgiving Mass,  
The congregation sit and yawn,  
Their sentiments were re-born.  
Like fresh air they loved their *kvass*,  
And at the table, dinner served,  
Due rank and custom they observed.

36.

And so grew old, like all things mortal,  
The husband was the first to pass  
Through the grave's gloomy portal,  
Wore the funeral crown at last.  
Now he rested from his labours,  
And was wept for by his neighbours,  
By his children and his wife.  
He'd led a good and simple life,  
And died just before his dinner.  
Where his honoured dust now lies  
His epitaph discreetly sighs:  
*Dimitry Larin, a poor sinner,*  
*God's servant and a brigadier,*  
*Beneath this stone, rests quietly here.*

37.

Returning to his home, young Lensky  
Went to pay his fond respects,  
At his neighbour's grave, and truly  
Paid tribute with a tear. 'Who's next?  
*Alas, poor Yorick!*' he lamented,  
'In his arms I played, contented,  
When I was but a little boy,  
Took his old medal for a toy!  
He hoped Olga and I would wed,  
Even now I hear him say,  
'Shall I live to see that day?'  
And full of grief that he was dead,  
Lensky, for a funeral  
Elegy penned a madrigal.

38.

Then too, with fervent weeping,  
He sat down and wrote another,  
Honouring, where they lay sleeping,  
Both his father and his mother...  
Alas! From life's dark furrows rise  
The human harvest to our eyes,  
Rise and ripen, briefly nourished,  
Where they fall, others flourish...  
So our heedless race today  
Grows recklessly and fills the room,  
Pushes its grandsires to the tomb.  
We too, we too, the same old way;  
Our grandchildren think it no crime  
To crowd us out before our time!

39.

So, enjoy the fleeting hour  
Of this fickle life, my friends!  
I count myself free of its power,  
Know its worth, and how it ends.  
I'm blind to all its illusion,  
Yet within my heart's confusion,  
Distant hopes will sometimes start:  
It would be painful to depart  
Leaving not a trace behind.  
I live, I write but not for praise;  
But only, it seems, from my days  
To leave a name for fate to find,  
That one line in the memory  
May speak, like a fond friend, of me.

40.

My verse may touch someone's heart,  
Some stanza, preserved by fate,  
Some fragment of my precious art,  
Saved from Lethe's darkened spate.  
Perhaps too (oh, flattering hope!)  
Some fool may yet achieve a trope,  
Pronouncing: 'He was a poet!'  
Even though he cannot know it,  
While pointing out my famous bust.  
But you, disciple of the Muse,  
Receive my thanks, and grateful dues,  
Who keep my pyramid from rust,  
Whose kind hand will smooth like down,  
The ageing laurels of my crown!

## **Chapter Three**

*Elle étoit fille, elle étoit amoureuse.*  
**Malfilâtre**

*She was a girl, she was amorous.*

1.

‘You’re off again? Oh, these poets!’  
Goodbye, Eugene, I must be leaving.’  
‘I’ll not keep you, but where is it,  
You fritter away your evenings?’  
– ‘At the Larins.’ – ‘How very odd.  
Aren’t you bored to death, dear God,  
Killing the hours dozing there?’  
– ‘Not at all.’ – ‘Well, I declare,  
I can’t see it. Here’s what you’ll find  
I imagine (say, if I’m right):  
A simple Russian scene, by night,  
Hospitable, a family grind,  
Tea, and jam, and endless prattle,  
About the weather, crops, and cattle...’

2.

‘I don’t see what’s so bad about it.’  
‘Ah, boredom, that’s what’s bad, my friend.’  
‘I hate the fashionable circuit,  
All make for home in the end,  
Where we can...’ ‘Oh, an elegy!  
Dear Lord, enough, enough! Have pity!  
You’re really going? And so swiftly?  
But, listen, Lensky, when shall I see  
This Phyllis, who’s so interesting,  
This idol for your mind, and pen,  
Your tears, verse, et cetera, when? ...  
Introduce me.’ ‘Now, you’re jesting.’  
‘No.’ – ‘With pleasure.’ – ‘When?’ – ‘Tonight.  
They’d welcome you with great delight.’

3.

‘Let’s go.’ They leave without delay,  
Arrive, and greeted heartily,  
Are treated in the kindest way  
With old-fashioned hospitality.  
The polished table shines, I fear  
Those dishes of preserves appear,  
Jugs of cranberry juice, all that  
Custom demands. They sat and sat,  
And passed the time as people do,  
Politely mentioning various topics,  
Filling the silences with gossip:  
Time dragged slowly or it flew,  
Until (a wealth of thanks conceive),  
They exit; Lenksy loth to leave.

4.

Homeward they go the shortest way,  
Since it’s late, and travel quickly:  
Reader, you’d know what they say?  
Then listen now, in secret, with me.  
‘My dear Onegin, you’re yawning.’  
‘A habit Lensky.’ ‘You find life boring,  
More than usual?’ ‘No, the same.  
Too dark for driving some would claim,  
Press on! Andryushka, quicker, quicker!  
Oh, this stupid countryside!  
So: Madame Larina, while we ride,  
I found an honest plain old dear,  
Though that cranberry juice may kill:  
It’s bound at least to make me ill.’

5.

‘And tell me, which was Tatyana?’  
‘The one who sat by the window,  
Sad as Zhukovsky’s *Svetlana*,  
As though she had a private sorrow’  
‘Can you really love the younger?’  
– Why not? – Well, I’d prefer her sister,  
If I were a poet, as you are  
Olga’s less alive by far,  
Just like those Van Dyck Madonnas,  
Pretty yes, with that round face,  
As the foolish moon in space,  
The foolish horizon honours.’  
Vladimir thought him quite wrong,  
Yet diplomatic, held his tongue.

6.

Meanwhile Onegin’s first session  
At the Larins had produced  
On one and all a strong impression,  
All the neighbours were seduced.  
There was no end of speculation,  
Hosts of rumours in circulation,  
Jokes and carping comments too,  
Tatyana was betrothed: some knew!  
Some claimed the marriage was agreed,  
Stated it quite positively,  
Delayed though, temporarily,  
Fashionable rings they need.  
As for Lensky’s fate, you know,  
All that was settled long ago.

7.

Tatyana listened, with vexation,  
To all this; yet, an innocent,  
Felt inexpressible elation,  
At the least unguarded moment.  
A thought took root in her heart,  
So a seed begins to start  
Heated by the warmth of spring,  
And time gives nurture to the thing.  
Her dreams had long since set her yearning,  
For that fatal sustenance,  
Fired by longing, circumstance,  
In solitude her heart was burning,  
Crushed by adolescent gloom,  
Her soul was waiting...but for whom?

8.

The one awaited....he is here;  
Her eyes are opened, it is he!  
Now night and day he will appear  
In dreams, that fevered, solitary,  
Speak of him, and endlessly  
All things declare, and magically,  
His presence: kindness is vexation,  
The servant's looks pure irritation.  
Lost in her deep melancholy,  
She pays no attention to their guests  
Curses their hours of idleness,  
Their visits an unwelcome folly,  
Hates the tedium of their visit,  
Their tendency to sit, and sit.

9.

Now with greater concentration,  
She reads the sweet romances,  
Finds a deeper fascination,  
In those soft seductive glances!  
Each figment of imagination,  
Every writer's fine creation,  
Cottin's *Malek-Adhel*, de Krudener's *de Linar*,  
The lover too of Rousseau's *Julie Womar*,  
*Werther*, born to be a martyr,  
And the peerless *Grandison*,  
Who sends me to sleep, all were as one;  
A single image as it were:  
The foolish dreamer sees them whole  
In Onegin's form, and soul.

10.

And sees herself the heroine  
Of all the authors she admires,  
*Clarissa*, *Julie*, or *Delphine*;  
Wanders among forest choirs  
With some dangerous volume roams,  
Through its pages swiftly combs,  
To find her passion, and her dream,  
Her overflowing heart, love's gleam.  
She sighs and in herself possesses  
Another's joy, another's sorrow,  
A little note then for her hero  
In her mind she writes, addresses.  
Yet ours, though he may be one,  
Is certainly no *Grandison*.

11.

In the high style of the past,  
An author of romantic fiction  
Had to present his hero as  
A paragon of pure perfection.  
Always unjustly persecuted,  
His character was executed  
To show intelligence and grace,  
A sensitive and handsome face.  
His heart forever burned with rapture,  
Pure devotion his desire,  
Prepared for sacrificial fire:  
And always, in the final chapter,  
Vice was ruthlessly put down,  
While virtue won a noble crown.

12.

But now our minds are somewhat cloudy,  
Morals makes us nod, not sins;  
Even in books, virtue's dowdy,  
And even there, at last, vice wins.  
All the British Muse's lumber  
Now disturbs a young girl's slumber,  
Her idol, someone to admire,  
Is the blood-sucking Vampire,  
*Melmoth*, Maturin's traveller,  
The *Corsair* or the Wandering Jew,  
Nodier's *Jean Sbogar* too.  
Lord Byron with a shrewd despair,  
Displays a hopeless egotism  
As saturnine romanticism.

13.

My friends, where's the sense in it?  
Perhaps by some divine decree,  
A fresh demon will inhabit  
Self, and end my poetry.  
Defying then the dread Apollo,  
The paths of humble prose I'll follow  
Write novels in established ways  
To fill up my declining days.  
No fear and menace in my tale,  
No villain's hidden agony,  
A simple Russian family  
With that my readers I'll regale,  
Love's enchantments: and my verse  
Our ancient customs shall rehearse.

14.

I'll record the honest speech  
Of an old uncle, or some father's,  
Then by the stream, beneath the beech  
The breathless meeting of young lovers;  
Fierce jealousy, sad separation,  
Tears of reconciliation,  
A second quarrel, then they sigh,  
Then to the altar, by and by....  
I'll recall the words of longing,  
Uttered in those days of bliss,  
In a time far, far from this,  
At my mistress's feet lying,  
Words that flowed from my tongue,  
Lost now that power of being young.

15.

Tatyana, my dear Tatyana!  
I share those tears that agitate:  
To the hands of fashion's monster,  
You now consign your fate.  
My dear one you're doomed to perish,  
But first what hopes you'll cherish,  
Blinded, dazed by sombre joys,  
You'll drink the poison love employs,  
You'll learn its bliss, its desires,  
While such dreams pursue you,  
Thinking every place you view  
To shelter lovers' trysts aspires;  
While fated everywhere to find,  
Your true seducer in your mind.

16.

Haunted by love's pain, Tatyana,  
Takes to the garden, walking  
Eyes downcast, till her languor,  
Prevents her from even moving.  
Her breast heaves, her cheeks aflame,  
Burning suddenly with shame,  
The breath on her lips is glazed,  
A roaring in her ears, eyes dazed...  
Night falls, and the moon patrols  
The vault of heaven. Near her room,  
A nightingale, from woodland gloom  
Its rich sonorous cadence rolls.  
Tatyana, in the darkness lying,  
To her nurse is softly sighing.

17.

‘I can’t sleep, Nurse; it’s stifling!  
Open the window then sit by me.’  
‘What is it Tanya, dear?’ ‘It’s trifling:  
Nurse, I’m bored, tell me a story.’  
‘A story, Tanya? In my time,  
I knew scores and scores, in rhyme,  
Old tales they were, fables laden  
With Evil spirits, a lovely maiden;  
Tanya, it’s gone, my memory,  
All that I knew forgotten. Yes,  
Time’s done it’s work, I must confess,  
I’m muddled now!’ ... ‘But Nurse, tell me,  
When you were young, long ago,  
Were you in love? I must know!’

18.

‘Tanya! What a notion! In those days,  
We’d never heard the word. One sigh  
And my mother-in-law, bless her ways,  
Would chase me about, fit to die.’  
Then how did you come to wed?’ ‘Tanya,  
It was God’s will now, my Vanya,  
Was just a lad, if you could have seen  
Us then, and I, I was just thirteen.  
The matchmaker spent two weeks trying  
To persuade my parents, no less,  
Then father blessed me, and said yes.  
Oh, you should have heard me crying,  
Still wept as they unwound my hair,  
And sang me to church. What a pair!’

19.

‘So I joined another family,  
My husband’s folk...do you hear?’  
‘Ah, Nurse, Nurse, I’m so unhappy,  
It seems to me I’m ill, my dear,  
I long to sob, I long to weep...!’  
– ‘My little one, you need to sleep.  
Oh Lord! What can I get you, daughter...  
Let me sprinkle you, fetch holy water,  
You’re in a fever...’ ‘No, I’m not ill:  
I’m...Nurse, you see...I’m in love.’  
– ‘Oh my child, Heavens above,  
May the Good Lord preserve us still!’ –  
The sign of the cross she made  
Over the girl, and trembling prayed.

20.

‘I am in love’ Tatyana sighs,  
In a soft whisper, gives a moan.  
‘Dear, you can’t be well,’ replies,  
The nurse. ‘It’s love. Leave me alone.’  
Meanwhile, the sad moon dreams,  
On the girl’s pale beauty gleams,  
Shines above, its tranquil light  
Silvering loosened hair, tears bright,  
The bench beside her, where the nurse  
In kerchief and quilted gown,  
By our heroine sits, spell-bound.  
And all the world lies still, below,  
Bathed in the moon’s enchanted glow.

21.

Tanya watches the moon's sphere,  
Her soul in distant regions wanders,  
And then, a sudden thought shines clear:  
'Nurse, go now.' She swiftly ponders:  
'Bring me ink and paper, draw  
That table nearer; I'll be sure  
To sleep later. Now goodnight.'  
Alone, in silence. The moon sheds light.  
Propped on her elbow, now she pens,  
Thinking of Eugene, all the while,  
A simple letter, free of guile,  
That breathes a young girl's innocence.  
The letter's done, is folded, sealed...  
Tatyana! Whose name is revealed?

22.

I've known women, proud and cold,  
As pure as winter's ice, as rigid,  
Unfathomable, even to the bold,  
As stern, as distant, and as frigid.  
I marvelled at their arrogance,  
Iron virtue, chilly glance,  
To keep well clear of them, I vow,  
And that inscription on their brow,  
The one on Hades' Gate: Surrender  
All hope, all you who enter here.'  
What consoles them is our fear,  
They abhor it when we're tender.  
Perhaps you've seen, on Neva's shore,  
The like of them, one or more.

23

And I've seen other beauties too  
Ringed by loyal devotees,  
Indifferent to me or you,  
To sighs, or praise, or flatteries.  
And yet I was amazed to find  
Them often feign a change of mind,  
Frightening a timid love away  
Reviving it the following day:  
At least a pretence of empathy,  
At least their words seeming more,  
Kind and tender than before.  
So the gullible would blindly,  
Young and fond, pursue again,  
That fatal sweetness, though in vain.

24.

Why then consider Tanya guilty?  
Because her simplicity, it seems,  
Is ignorant of deceit, and still she  
Believes completely in her dreams?  
Or because her love lacks art,  
Follows the promptings of her heart?  
Because she's trusting, and honest  
And by Heaven has been blessed,  
With profound imagination,  
A fiery will, a lively mind,  
A soul for passion's fires designed,  
A spirit tuned to all creation?  
Surely, then, you can forgive,  
A fierce desire to love and live?

25.

Tatyana is no cool coquette,  
She loves in all seriousness,  
Yields to it like a child, as yet  
Full of innocence and sweetness.  
She'd never argue: Let's delay  
Increase love's value, find a way  
To mesh him deeper in our net.  
First rouse his vanity and let  
Him hope, deploy uncertainty,  
Exhaust him, now, let him doubt,  
Till the flame is dying out;  
Then calmly stir his jealousy,  
Lest tired of pleasure, freedom won,  
He ends the struggle and has done.

26.

Now, I'm in some difficulty,  
Since, to preserve my reputation,  
I must give her letter, error-free,  
In Russian, honouring our nation.  
But Tanya wrote it all so badly,  
Never read Russian papers, sadly,  
Had never, even when young,  
Been fluent in her native tongue.  
And so she wrote in French of course ...  
What's to be done? As we all know,  
No lady's ever deigned to show  
Her love thus, since, despite its force,  
Our great language, in its pride,  
Has never with letters been allied.

27.

I know: they'd like to force our girls  
To read in Russian. Ah, what horror!  
Could you conceive those golden curls,  
Izmailov's Journal set before her!  
Is it not true, my fellow poet,  
Those dear creatures, oh, you know it,  
For whom, to expiate our crimes,  
We wrote all those secret rhymes,  
To whom our hearts were consecrated,  
Didn't they mutilate our speech,  
Our Russian language, and yet each  
Fault was charming, though it grated?  
A foreign tongue it is that slips,  
Habitually, between their lips.

28.

May I never meet, at a ball,  
By the entrance step, or on it,  
A scholar, in a yellow shawl,  
An Academician in a bonnet!  
Like rose-red lips without a smile,  
Russian without such faults is vile,  
Lacks charm. The new generation,  
Of beauties, with the press's clamour,  
May yet accustom us to grammar,  
Make poetry their occupation;  
As for me....they're not my ways,  
My heart is with the good old days.

29.

Their incorrect and careless chatter,  
Their errors of pronunciation,  
Still add emotion to the matter,  
Stir the same old sweet sensation.  
I've not the strength for repentance,  
French still entrances in a sentence,  
Like the sins that youth rehearses,  
Or Bogdanóvich's light verses.  
Enough. It's time for that letter,  
Written by my pure young beauty,  
I gave my word, and it's my duty,  
Though blank pages would be better;  
We've no use for Parny's rhymes  
In these far less tender times.

30.

Singer of *Feasts* and melancholy,  
Baratynsky, were you with me now,  
I might commit a daring folly  
And ask your Muse to take a bow,  
Borrow your bewitching skill,  
Translate my Tanya, with a will,  
Into verse that would amaze us,  
All those foreign words and phrases.  
Where are you, now? It's your right,  
I cede my own in deference.....  
But no, beneath Finland's skies,  
Far now from praise, he sighs,  
Among sad cliffs for preference.  
In spirit, he abandons me  
To all my plaintive misery.

31.

Tayana's letter's here before me,  
I treat it as a sacred treasure,  
Read it secretively, sadly,  
And never fully plumb its measure.  
Who inspired such tenderness,  
Surrender's language, rare excess?  
Who taught her this intense emotion,  
This heartfelt speech, gave the notion,  
So charming and so perilous?  
I know not, yet here's my translation,  
Pale, incomplete, an imitation,  
Of a living work, as dubious  
As an air from Weber's *Freischütz* played,  
By nervous hands, mind half-obeyed.

## TATYANA'S LETTER TO ONEGIN

'I write – what more is there to say?  
How shall I add to my confession?  
I know it's in your power today  
To punish me with your derision.  
Yet had compassion a part to play  
In your thoughts, you would wait,  
And not abandon me to fate.  
At first I wished to stay quite silent,  
Thus, you never would have heard  
Of shame or misery, one word.  
If I'd reserved a hope, content  
To see you but once a week,  
Be in your presence, hear you speak,  
Utter a few words of greeting,  
And then, while you were gone,  
Have that to think, and think, upon,  
Day and night, till our next meeting.  
You're unsociable, they say  
That the country bores you, sadly;  
And we....don't shine in any way,  
Although we welcome you, so gladly.

Why did you come, to disturb us?  
Lost in our rural solitude?  
I'd not have known you, and thus  
Been spared this deep inquietude,  
In time (who knows?) I might have viewed  
My world with equanimity,  
This fever born of youth once past,  
Found another, served at last,  
As wife and mother, faithfully.

Another? ....No, no there's none  
On earth but you my heart adores!  
That was ordained by fate, alone...  
It's Heaven's will: I am yours.  
My life was but a pledge till now  
Of our prophetic meeting: yes,  
God sent you to me, I avow,  
Till in the grave we shall rest...  
You appeared to me in dreams,  
My soul heard your voice ring clear,  
As yet unknown, I held you dear,  
Stirred by a stranger's glance, it seems,  
Long ago....It was no phantom!  
You appeared, and instantly,  
My hearts ablaze, I cried: 'It's he',  
In my thoughts, I was struck dumb.  
Is it not true? I often heard you:  
In quiet, did you not speak to me,  
In works of charity, all through  
The hours of anguished prayer I knew,  
When my head ached so painfully?  
And now, at this very moment,  
Is it not you, this heaven-sent  
Vision, standing by my bed,  
Deep, in the translucent night  
To bring, with love and solace bright,  
Fresh hope on which my heart is fed?

Are you then my guardian angel,  
Or my tempter, force of evil:  
Dispel my doubts, I am blind,  
Perhaps this is all vanity,  
The fancies of a foolish mind,  
Mine another destiny....  
So be it! My fate now lies  
In your hands, my direction,  
The tears flow from my eyes,  
I beseech your protection...  
Conceive it. No one here to cherish  
Me, or understand my moan,  
My mind in torment, I'm alone:  
Silently, I'm doomed to perish.  
I await you: one look turned  
Towards me, wake hope in my heart,  
Or make this painful dream depart  
Speak the reproach I have earned!

I tremble to re-read....must end!  
My heart sinks now, in shame and terror...  
On you alone I must depend  
Boldly trusting in your honour...'

32.

Tatyana moans then gives a sigh,  
The letter trembles in her hand;  
The wafer meant to seal it's dry,  
Still quivering there on her tongue.  
Her head sinks, the stars grow older,  
Her night-dress slips from her shoulder,  
Soon the dawn will bring new light,  
The moon no longer shines as bright,  
The radiance dies: there the vale  
Shines with mist. Here a stream  
Is turned to silver. From it's dream,  
A shepherd's pipe wakes the dale.  
Morning comes: the dark is done,  
To my Tatyana, all is one.

33.

She barely notices the dawn,  
Sits with head downcast, still holds  
The seal with her monogram,  
Poised above the letter's folds.  
The nurse, old Filipevna,  
Enters softly and disturbs her,  
Bringing breakfast on a tray,  
'It's time to rise my child; it's day:  
Ah, now but you're up already!  
See, my early bird, my darling,  
Save us, how well you're looking!  
Last night what a fright you gave me!  
I see your fretting's left no trace,  
Red as a poppy, your bright face.'

34.

– ‘Oh, Nurse, you won’t refuse me.’ –  
‘Of course not darling, only say...’  
– ‘Don’t think...truly...don’t accuse me...  
No suspicions... nurse, obey.’ –  
My sweet child, as God is holy.’  
– ‘Then send your grandson, and he  
Must take this letter, secretly, to O...  
To our neighbour... he, you know,  
And never breathe a word of it,  
And he must never mention me...’ –  
‘To whom, my dear, who is this he?  
I know I’m slow, and short of wit,  
But we’ve so many neighbours, why  
I can’t count them if I try.’

35.

– ‘Nurse, how slow you are to guess!’ –  
‘My darling, well, I’m getting old;  
Old, Tanya, and my mind...God bless,  
Once master had no need to scold,  
When I was young, a mere suggestion...’  
– ‘Nurse, now, that’s not the question,  
What has all that to do with me,  
This letter here, don’t you see,  
It’s for Onegin.’ – ‘Yes, indeed,  
Don’t be cross with me, my sweet,  
My mind....But you’re pale as a sheet:  
Child, is there something you need?’  
– ‘Nurse, it’s nothing, I feel fine.  
Go now, take this note of mine.’ –

36.

The day slips past, with no reply,  
Another day, and still no sign,  
Dressed at dawn, she gives a sigh,  
A shadow, pale. Ah, for *one* line!  
Then Olga's suitor, Lensky's here:  
'Tell me will your friend appear?'  
Asks Larina, curious,  
'It seems he has forgotten us!'  
Tanya was blushing, trembling.  
'He promised he'd come, today,  
Perhaps the mail's caused some delay,'  
She heard our Lensky answering;  
Tanya downcast, as if she heard,  
A dark reproach in every word.

37.

Dusk falls, the samovar is gleaming  
Adorns the table, boiling hot,  
It glows and hisses, softly steaming,  
Vapour wreathes the china pot.  
Olga's there, and quietly fills  
The shining tea-cups, never spills  
A drop of that dark fragrant stream;  
A serving-lad hands round the cream.  
Tatyana hovers at the window,  
Breathing on the icy pane,  
She's lost in thought now, once again;  
On the misted glass, a shadow,  
Her little finger's traced, I see,  
The sacred letters, O and E.

38.

Her heartache feels like some disease,  
Her eyes are clouded, filled with tears,  
The sound of hooves! ...Sent to freeze  
Her. Galloping, closer it appears.  
'Eugene! Ah!' – Light as a wraith  
Tatyana flies, as swift as faith,  
From porch to yard, in a moment,  
Not looking backward for an instant,  
Past the flowers, down the lawn,  
Past the bridge, and pond, she stops,  
At nothing, pathway, lake, or copse,  
Breaks the lilacs, hurrying on,  
Through the borders, gains the stream,  
And on the rustic bench's gleam

39.

Sinks to rest...

'Here's Yevgeny!  
Oh God, what must he think of me?'  
Her heart still, in it's agony,  
Still bears a hope, a dream darkly.  
She trembles, burning, in fear:  
Is this him, now? She cannot hear.  
Far off a choir of girls sing  
Picking berries in the evening,  
(As their master told them to,  
Not daring to stop, for then  
It's clear they're not eating them,  
By slyly thieving one or two;  
A clever scheme of rural song,  
Preventing them from doing wrong!)

### THE GIRLS' SONG

Come you maidens, pretty maidens,  
Come away, my pretty ones,  
Foot it sweetly, now and neatly,  
Foot it sweetly, on the grass!  
Sing a song, unbind your hair,  
A song we love, a merry song,  
And draw to us a handsome lad,  
To our dance, to our choir.  
When we see him, when he's near us,  
When we see our lad approach,  
Let's surround him, in a trice,  
Pelt him, with ripe red cherries,  
Raspberries, sweet redcurrants:  
Eavesdropper, don't you dare  
Listen to our secret song,  
Never spy on what we do,  
What we sing's not meant for you!

40.

Tatyana hears their distant choir,  
But scarcely comprehends their art,  
Waiting there, her cheeks on fire,  
Tries to calm her beating heart,  
But still the pounding in her ears,  
Still the throbbing is fierce,  
And the flame in her cheek.  
So a poor butterfly will seek  
To beat once more its rainbow wing,  
Frantic and quivering, caught  
By some careless lad for sport,  
Or a hare trembles, hapless thing,  
Glimpsing from the distant field  
The huntsman by the hedge, concealed.

41.

At last she gave a sudden sigh,  
And rose from the bench again,  
Turned, and saw before her: 'Why,  
It is Yevgeny,' sees him plain,  
Standing there, his eyes ablaze,  
As lightning in his visage plays.  
She halts, as if scorched by flame,  
Rooted to the ground, in shame.  
But the end to this encounter,  
So unlooked-for, I'll not give it,  
Lack the strength just now to live it,  
After such unremitting labour,  
A walk indeed would suit me best,  
Before I meditate the rest.

## **Chapter Four**

*La morale est dans la nature des choses.*

**Necker**

*Morality is in the nature of things.*

1-7.

The less we show our love to woman,  
The easier she is to win,  
The easier to snare and ruin,  
In seduction's net of sin.  
Once cold-blooded lechery  
Was praised, all that debauchery  
Considered as the art of love,  
And praised to the skies above,  
That serious and heartless sport,  
Fit only for our grandsire's stage,  
Old monkeys of another age.  
We've toppled Lovelace as we ought,  
Gone, with the fashions we abuse,  
Wigs and scarlet-heeled shoes.

8.

Who is not bored with evasion,  
Tired of repeating platitudes,  
Bringing the science of persuasion  
To bear on things we've all eschewed,  
Hearing the same outworn objections,  
Administering the same corrections  
To prejudices rarely seen  
In little girls of scarce thirteen?  
Who's not exhausted by their rages,  
Threats, entreaties, vows and fears,  
Deceit, and slander, rings and tears,  
Letters running to six pages,  
Aunts and mothers keeping house,  
The heavy friendship of a spouse?

9.

Such were my Yevgeny's thoughts.  
For he was victim from his youth  
Of follies fit to test the courts,  
Unbridled passion was his truth.  
Spoilt by each casual encounter,  
Some girl, delighted that he's found her,  
Then disenchantment, bored desire,  
Yet bored again by conquest's mire;  
Hearing in the crowd, and after,  
In the sound, and silence cold,  
That sad protest in his soul,  
Stifling a yawn with laughter:  
Eight years he killed, hour by hour,  
Squandered youth, life's finest flower.

10.

Distanced from the claims of beauty,  
He followed still, for customs sake.  
Refused – found consolation swiftly,  
Deceived – a welcome rest would take.  
He sought them without joy, and met  
Their loss, without pain or regret,  
Their love, their hatred, went un-missed.  
So, for an evening game of whist,  
A casual guest comes, sits and plays,  
Indifferently, the game is done,  
He leaves again, and home has gone,  
Sleeps soundly, passes thus his days,  
With not a thought in the morning  
As to where he'll spend his evening.

11.

Yet now, receiving Tanya's note,  
Onegin's heart was deeply moved;  
The tender style in which she wrote,  
The simple girlish way she loved.  
Her face possessed his memory,  
Her pallor, and her melancholy,  
He plunged, head first, into the stream,  
A harmless, and delightful dream.  
Perhaps the ancient flame of passion,  
Thrilled him in its former way,  
Though he'd no wish to betray  
A soul so trusting, in that fashion.  
But we must to the garden go,  
Where Tanya met him, as we know.

12.

For two long minutes neither spoke,  
And then Onegin approached her,  
Saying: 'You wrote to me, I broke  
The seal, I have read your letter.  
Don't disavow it, I find here,  
A love that's innocent, sincere.  
Your candour: that is dear to me,  
It brought to life, instantly,  
Those feelings, so long quiescent;  
That's no ready compliment,  
All that you sincerely meant  
I'll requite, with your assent:  
But hear my confession through,  
I'll leave the verdict up to you.'

13.

‘Could I happily circumscribe  
My life with the domestic round;  
Could kindly fate for me prescribe  
A role as husband, father; found  
My being in family existence  
For but a moment, mind and sense –  
Then truly, in this life,  
You alone would be my wife.  
No rhetoric, no flattery,  
I’d find in you my heart’s ideal,  
Find that youthful folly real,  
A cure for my sad history,  
Token of every beauty, good,  
And be as happy...as I could!

14.

‘I was not born for happiness,  
All such is alien to my mind;  
Of your perfection too, no less  
Am I unworthy, you would find.  
Believe me (conscience is my guide)  
Wed, the fire would soon have died;  
However I wished to prove true,  
Habit would cool my love for you.  
Then you would weep, yet your tears,  
Your grief, would never move my heart,  
But madden me, spur me to depart.  
What thorns, not roses, through the years  
Would Hymen strew along our way,  
Many a night, and many a day?

15.

What in the world is worse than this,  
A household, a neglected wife,  
Mourning her husband's absent kiss,  
Her days and nights alone, through life,  
While the spouse, knowing her worth,  
(Cursing the hour of his birth),  
Is ever-jealous, sullen, sour,  
Cold, darkly threatening, and dour!  
Such am I. Was it this you sought,  
With your pure and ardent mind;  
Was this what you hoped to find;  
This the message your note brought?  
Is this the destiny that waits,  
Dealt you by the cruel Fates?

16.

His days and dreams, what man recovers?  
My soul, nothing can renew....  
My love for you is as a brother's,  
More tender even, but as true:  
So hear me without tears or anger,  
A girl will often change her lover,  
Fresh dreams will replace the last,  
As, after winter's icy blast,  
Spring clothes the branches with new leaves,  
As heaven dictates. You'll love again.  
And then...our hearts we must restrain,  
Not all will see what your soul weaves,  
Know you as I, share your belief:  
The inexperienced come to grief.

17.

So Eugene preached, as she listened;  
She scarcely breathed; made no reply;  
Saw nothing through the tears that glistened,  
Blind with that mist that veils the eye.  
He gave his arm: downcast, head bent,  
Upon it, sadly, Tanya leant,  
(*Mechanically, as they say*)  
And slowly they both made their way  
Homeward, through the kitchen-garden;  
Entered, together, arm in arm,  
No one finding any harm  
In that, for rustic life to pardon.  
There such freedoms are allowed,  
As much as in Moscow, the proud.

18.

Surely, my Reader, you'd agree  
Our friend behaved well, in his way,  
Dealt with her sympathetically;  
Not for the first time, made display  
Of nobility of soul; yet spite  
Never placed him in the right,  
Castigated ruthlessly  
By both friend and enemy,  
(Both are perhaps synonymous)  
Who showed him ambiguous respect.  
From foes we can ourselves protect:  
But from our friends, may God preserve us!  
Oh! Those friends, those friends, so dear,  
Not without cause I hail them here.

19.

What of it? Well, my true intention  
Is still to lull dark thoughts to sleep.  
But *in parentheses* I'll mention,  
That there's no infamy so deep,  
Born, in a garret, of a liar  
Nurtured by the mob, no dire  
Epigram in all its coarseness,  
No absurdity, no foulness,  
That a friend would not repeat,  
In decent company, and smile,  
Without a hint of hate or guile,  
Ten times, and never miss a beat;  
Yet he is yours, through thick and thin,  
He loves you....like your dearest kin!

20.

H'm! My valued Reader, tell me,  
Are all your relations well?  
You might enjoy it, so allow me,  
For your enlightenment, to spell  
Out clearly what *relation* means.  
Relations then are those, it seems,  
Whom we are obliged to cherish,  
Show respect to, love, and relish  
Visits to at Christmas-tide,  
Or to whom we send a card,  
At least, denoting our regard,  
Then, the year through, we can hide,  
Our face will never cross their mind...  
Ah well, to them may God be kind!

21.

Of course, a tender beauty's love,  
More sure than that of friends or kin,  
You may trust through storms above,  
Whatever trouble you are in.  
Ah, but then the whirl of fashion,  
And the waywardness of passion,  
Opinions they express in town...  
The gentle sex is light as down.  
Though you're a spouse respected,  
In every vicissitude of life,  
By your good and virtuous wife,  
Yet the most loyal, it's expected,  
Are subject to infatuations,  
Love is a mere game of Satan's.

22.

Whom to love, whom to believe in,  
On whom alone shall we depend?  
Who will fit their speech and action,  
To our measure, in the end?  
Who will refrain from slander,  
Who support us when we wander,  
Be amused by our vices;  
Who is never bored by us?  
Never pursue a phantom,  
Or waste your efforts on the air  
Love yourself, your only care,  
Estimable Reader: come,  
No more deserving lover,  
Or more fitting, you'll discover.

23.

But, the outcome of their meeting?  
Alas, not difficult to guess!  
Love's violent pains, heart's beating,  
All those torments that oppress,  
The soul, wreathed in its sadness;  
Worse, with a joyless madness  
Poor Tatyana was on fire,  
Sleep deserted her entire.  
Health, life's beauty, sweetness past,  
Her smile, her calm serenity,  
Like lost fading echoes flee,  
Poor Tanya's youth fading fast:  
As a storm will often shroud  
The dawning day in sombre cloud.

24.

Tatyana's bloom is all but gone,  
She, more pallid, and more silent!  
Nothing can provide distraction,  
Or stir her soul, no incitement.  
Whispering solemnly together,  
Neighbours shook their heads, forever  
Sighing: 'It's high time she was wed!' ...  
Enough. It's high time that instead,  
I painted over this sad scene,  
And portrayed love's happiness,  
Though, dear Reader, I confess  
I'm overcome, by pity I mean;  
Forgive me: I've loved from the start  
My Tatyana, with all my heart.

25.

So, Vladimir more captivated  
Hour by hour, by Olga's beauty  
And her youthful charms, elated,  
Surrendered himself completely.  
Always together, in her room  
Side by side, in the gloom,  
Or in the garden, in the dawn,  
They'd stroll about on the lawn.  
And then? Full of confusion,  
Encouraged by his Olga's smile,  
Timidly, once in a while,  
Modest, tender, sweet illusion,  
He'd dare to toy with a tress,  
Or kiss the hem of her dress.

26.

Sometimes he read to Olga,  
Some profoundly moral tale,  
Nature passages of a power  
Beside which Chateaubriand's pale,  
Skipping over certain pages,  
(Fancies, fables of the ages,  
Unsuitable for girls to hear),  
But not without a blush, I fear.  
Or in some corner, an hour or so,  
Over a game of chess they pored,  
Deep in thought, above the board,  
Silent, leaning on an elbow,  
Till Lensky, with abstracted look,  
With his pawn took his own rook.

27.

At home he renders it apparent  
That Olga occupies his mind,  
Applies himself with diligent  
Attention to her album: find,  
Within, a rural landscape painted,  
One with which she's acquainted,  
A tomb, a Cyprian shrine to love,  
Perched on a lyre a little dove,  
Lightly sketched, with wash and ink,  
Or on a page some other's signed,  
He leaves a tender verse behind,  
His dream's mute monument, a link  
From passing thought, enduring rhyme,  
That stands impervious to time.

28.

You'll often have seen, of course,  
Such albums of provincial girls,  
Which their friends will all endorse  
With friendship's and wisdom's pearls,  
Ill-rhymed verse, by tradition,  
A scribbled, and mis-spelt, rendition.  
Anywhere, start, end, or middle,  
Lines too short, long, or a riddle,  
And on the first page, for inspection:  
*'Qu'écrirez-vous sur ces tablettes?'*  
Above *'t(out) à v(ous), Annette'*;  
While the last has this reflection:  
*'Whoever's love for you's more bright,  
On the next page let them write.'*

29.

And there you'll see, without a doubt,  
Two hearts, some flowers, a torch assure,  
With many a solemn vow round about,  
How love *to the tomb* will endure;  
Some army type too will have written,  
An ironic stanza of how he's smitten.

I must confess I scarcely mind  
Adding to albums of that kind,  
Grateful, in my heart of hearts,  
The eager nonsense I may pen  
Will not be picked apart again,  
By critics of the higher arts,  
Who'll solemnly consider it,  
And argue whether it shows wit.

30.

But you, the suspect volumes bound,  
To torment fashionable rhymesters,  
In secret regions underground,  
Abodes of demons and of monsters;  
You handsome albums, illustrated  
By Fyodor Tolstoy, decorated  
With lines by Baratynsky too,  
May Heaven's lightning wither you!  
When a fashionable lady  
Offers me her own, in quarto,  
The rage and spite she cannot know,  
That stirs dark epigrams within me,  
Prompting something steeped in gall,  
Though she requires a madrigal!

31.

No madrigals from Lensky flow  
Into Olga's album here,  
His lines breathe love alone, and no  
Sparkles of icy wit appear.  
To Olga, his hours he devotes;  
All he sees and hears, he notes;  
Full of life's sincerest passions,  
His tributes, carefully, he fashions.  
So Yazykov, when you're inspired  
Singing, from your burning heart  
God knows whom and what; your art,  
The noble elegies you've sired,  
Will at some far distant date,  
Tell the story of your fate.

32.

But hush! You hear? Our sternest critic  
Commands us to reject for good,  
The *wretched wreath of elegy* (sic),  
To our poetic brotherhood,  
Cries: 'Cease your endless squawking,  
This perpetual sterile talking,  
Lamenting *what is done and gone*;  
Enough, it's time now to move on!'  
– 'You're right, and so you'd show us,  
The classic mask, the trumpet, sword,  
And recreate the magic hoard,  
Through our work, of lost genius:  
That's it, my friend?' – 'No! Your pen,  
Must write true odes, odes gentlemen,

33.

As in the olden days they flowed,  
As they composed them long ago...’  
‘– Only the solemn choral ode!  
Enough, it’s all the same, you know,  
Remember what Dimitriev said  
In his deft satire: Is all you’ve read  
All of that ancient rhetoric,  
Better than one dour modern lyric?’ –  
‘Ah, but the elegy’s so light,  
So thin, and sparse, and so empty,  
The ode shows pure nobility  
Treads the skies.’ Well now, I might  
Challenge that, but here’s the thing,  
I’d not set the ages quarrelling.

34.

In love with fame, by freedom bitten,  
With tumult in his heart and head,  
What odes might Vladimir have written,  
Which Olga never would have read.  
Is there a poet who rehearses  
For his love, his latest verses?  
They say there’s no sweeter delight  
Than that for poet, day or night.  
How blessed is the modern lover  
Who reads the works of his creation,  
To the object of his adoration,  
While she gazes at the cover!  
Blessed is he...although she might  
Be more amused by something light.

35.

The fruits of my own meditation,  
I read to my old nurse, who'll lend  
To products of my inspiration,  
The indulgence of a childhood friend;  
Or after a long tedious dinner,  
I'll seize a neighbour by the collar,  
Who's dropped by accidentally,  
And choke him with a tragedy,  
Or else (all joking aside)  
Exhausted by regret, and rhyme,  
By the lake I'll walk, the chime  
Of my verse by the water's side  
Startling the wild ducks till they  
Rise from the shore, and soar away.

36-37.

But, what of Onegin? True, dear Reader!  
Your forbearance now I'll crave,  
His daily round I'll describe here,  
For your pleasure, so be brave.  
Like a hermit in his heaven,  
On summer morns, he'll rise at seven;  
Then take his way, despite the chill,  
To the stream below the hill.  
Like Byron, who of Gulnare sings,  
He swims that little Hellespont,  
Then sips the news from some vile font,  
Of wisdom, then for coffee rings,  
And then he'll dress, may write a letter, a  
Second stroll, and then *et cetera...*

38-39

A book, a walk, sleep that's deep,  
Shadowy woods and crystal brook,  
A dark-eyed, white-skinned maid to keep  
The heart alive with kiss and look;  
A lively horse and responsive,  
A light dinner, not too pensive,  
A bottle of sparkling wine,  
Peace and quiet – such the fine  
And cloistered life Onegin led.  
He gently yielded to its ways,  
Ceased to count the summer days,  
Gave himself to it instead,  
Forgetting friends and city life,  
And tiresome pleasures full of strife.

40.

But summer in our northern clime,  
A parody of southern winter,  
Flashes by, and in no time  
Though we'd deny its flight, is over.  
The sky with autumn's breath is clouded,  
More often now the sun is shrouded;  
Shorter and shorter grow the days,  
Sad rustling fills the woodland ways,  
With all their mysteries laid bare;  
Southward stretch the caravans  
Of wild geese, in noisy clans,  
And, mist on meadows everywhere,  
A tedious season we await,  
Who find November at the gate.

41.

Dawn breaks in a chilly gloom,  
Abandoned, the fields are silent,  
And hungry wolves, that loom  
From the fog, the horse can scent  
On the highway, snorts and quivers;  
The wary traveller first shivers,  
Then dashes off uphill, in flight.  
Now from the shed at morning light  
The hand no longer drives the cattle,  
Nor calls them to their pen at noon.  
Indoors the maid will softly croon  
To the spinning-wheel's low rattle,  
Her work the crackling firewood lights,  
The faithful friend of wintry nights.

42.

Frost already, frozen noses,  
Meadows silver, sunlight meagre...  
(My Reader thinks the rhyme is *roses*:  
Take it then, since you're so eager!)  
Brighter than finest parquet gleams  
The ice that paves the hidden streams,  
The merry lads cut with their skates,  
Toying happily with the Fates.  
A great fat goose her red-webbed feet  
Extends, and tries the gleaming ice,  
Slithers, and slips, in a trice,  
Slides to rest, her fall complete;  
Glittering, the first winter snow  
Stars the frozen shores below.

43.

What can one do in such a season?  
Walk? The countryside you roam  
Is bare, inevitably bores, the reason:  
It's as monotonous as home.  
Go riding on the empty steppe?  
Be careful of your horses step,  
Sliding on ice, with his worn shoe,  
Down he'll slip, and throw you too.  
Spend the time indoors, reading?  
There's Dominique de Pradt, or Scott.  
You don't care for them a lot?  
Accounts, drink, rage, the gloomy evening,  
Goes somehow, tomorrow too,  
Triumphant you'll see winter through.

44.

A true Childe Harold, my Onegin  
Yields to pensive idleness,  
With icy baths his days begin,  
At home all day, more or less,  
Alone, engrossed in calculation;  
From dawn, his only occupation,  
To strike a billiard-ball or two,  
Not more, with an old blunt cue;  
Then as the rural evening nears,  
The cue's abandoned, half-lights fade,  
Beside the fire a table's laid,  
He waits then Lensky appears,  
His three roans in a troika. Fine,  
Now at last, it's time to dine!

45.

Bottles of Cliquot or Moët,  
The heavenly drink, you'd agree,  
In chilled bottles, for the poet,  
Reaches the table, speedily,  
It sparkles, like the Hippocrene.  
Once, it's golden bubbles seen,  
(Likenesses too, of this and that)  
Enchanted me: I often sat  
Captivated by its essence;  
Cheerfully, I'd give my all  
To imbibe it, friends: recall?  
How many follies in its presence,  
What laughter from enchanted streams,  
Verses, quarrels: ah, what dreams!

46.

Yet to my stomach it's a traitor,  
With its hissing, foaming ways;  
*Bordeaux*, I tell the waiter:  
That's my favourite, nowadays.  
Champagne is like a mistress,  
Sparkling, lively, and capricious,  
Wilful, wild, but empty too...  
To Champagne I'm no longer true,  
But you, *Bordeaux*, are a friend  
In misfortune, and in sorrow,  
Ready to serve, today, tomorrow,  
Always faithful to the end,  
Joy of our hours of leisure, so  
Here's to my dear friend, *Bordeaux*!

47.

The fire dies down; the ashes veil  
The golden coals, a slender thread  
Of smoke scarce visible, soft, pale,  
Spirals upwards, overhead;  
The hearth glows, pipe-smoke passes,  
Up through the flue, sparkling glasses  
On the table, bubble, hiss,  
Then settle like the evening mist...  
(I love such conversation too,  
I love a friendly glass, the same,  
Around the hour the French name  
As being *entre chien et loup*,'  
Though why, I can hardly tell.)  
Our friends now are in its spell.

48.

‘How is she then, your fair neighbour,  
Your Olga, how’s Tatyana too?’  
– ‘Just a little more, a flavour...  
Fine...They’re all well, and send you  
Their greetings, ah, what a beauty  
Olga’s turned into, so lovely,  
Her neck, her throat, her shoulder!  
What spirit too! Before we’re older,  
You must go, they’d be delighted.  
You visited them twice, and then  
Never once called on them again:  
Besides, my friend, you’re invited,  
Like the fool I am, I clean forgot!  
You must go, no matter what.’ –

49.

‘I must?’ – ‘Yes: for Tanya’s birthday.  
Olga and her mother ask you,  
To join them, it’s next Saturday,  
There’s no reason for you not to.’ –  
‘Oh there’ll be no end of babble,  
And the crowd, all the rabble...’  
– No, nobody, assuredly!  
Who’ll be there? Just the family,  
Oblige me. Tell me that you’ll go.  
What do you say?’ – ‘Alright!’ – ‘Bravo!’ –  
Toasting his fair neighbour, Lensky,  
Drains his glass then, Heavens above,  
Talks of Olga: such is love!

50.

Lensky is overjoyed, elated,  
His wedding two scant weeks ahead.  
Love’s sweet crown so long awaited,  
The secrets of the marriage bed,  
He dreams of, in his exultation:  
Forgetting Hymen’s gifts, vexation,  
All the trouble, and the pain,  
Cold yawns with their icy train.  
While we, of Hymen’s charms the foes,  
Take domesticity to mean,  
Scene after dull, exhausting scene,  
Such stuff as Lafontaine’s suppose...  
My poor Lensky, from the heart,  
Was made for this very part.

51.

He was loved...such his conviction,  
Never doubting, lived in bliss.  
Blessed, the man who lives a fiction,  
And calms his fears with a kiss,  
Rests, on the fantasy within,  
Like a drunken traveller at an inn;  
Or, less harshly, like a butterfly  
Sipping the hour as it slips by;  
Yet wretched the man who foresees all,  
The sober-headed, for whom each  
Motivation, action, speech,  
Is hateful, in its essence, gall;  
Whose heart, experienced, grown chill,  
No longer forgets itself, at will.

## **Chapter Five**

*Oh, be spared these fearful dreams,  
Thou, my Svetlana.*

**Zhukovsky**

1.

That year, the autumn lingered,  
In yards and fields, loath to go.  
Nature waited, icy-fingered  
Winter stalled its fall of snow  
Till January the third, at night,  
Silently: the dawn was bright,  
And waking early, Tanya found,  
A whiteness covering the ground:  
Garden, roofs, and fences, pale;  
Magpies in the courtyard screaming;  
Frosted glass; and far hills gleaming;  
Woods cloaked with a silver veil;  
A wintry carpet deep and light,  
All around her, glittering white.

2.

Winter! ...The peasant with delight  
Makes a fresh road with his sleigh;  
His mare snorts at the snowy light,  
Steps delicately on her way;  
The swift *kibikas'* runners trace  
Powdery furrows as they race,  
Their coachmen, seated, wield the lash  
In sheepskin coats with scarlet sash;  
On his sledge the yard-boy seats  
The best dog, *Dasher*: he's the horse,  
His fingers frostbitten of course,  
He trots, performs amazing feats,  
It's fun, despite the pain he's in, though  
Mother scolds him from the window.

3.

But, perhaps this winter scene  
You may consider unattractive,  
Gentle Reader: low and mean,  
Nature's vulgar, over-active.  
Prince Vyazemsky, Muse-inspired,  
With purer inspiration fired,  
Gives us the first snow's measure,  
All the shades of wintry pleasure;  
Charms us with sublime invention,  
The delights of frosty days,  
Secret rendezvous in sleighs;  
To challenge him I've no intention  
Nor Baratynsky, who has made  
Fine verses on his Finnish Maid.

4.

Tatyana (Russian through and through,  
Herself not certain of the reason)  
Loved that cold perfection too,  
Loved Russia in the winter season;  
The glittering frost on shiny days;  
Sledge rides; and the far-off haze;  
The gleaming radiance on snow,  
Pink softness of its sunset glow.  
Epiphany they celebrated,  
In the silent misty evening,  
In the old way, maids foretelling  
To what their mistresses were fated,  
Promising, each year, again,  
A soldier-husband, a campaign.

5.

Tanya believed in every tale,  
The simple lore of bygone days;  
What dreams or cards portend, grew pale  
At the moon's meaning, each chill phase;  
Trembled at omens, anxiously;  
All objects spoke mysteriously,  
Warning her of this and that,  
Strange presentiments: even the cat  
That washed its face, and purred,  
Of guests arriving brought the word,  
From the stove on which it sat.  
And then, if suddenly she spied  
The crescent moon, at her left side,

6.

Her face grew pale, and she'd quiver.  
And when a meteor crossed the sky,  
Leaving a shining trail, she'd shiver,  
Watching its flight with anxious eye,  
And hurriedly, before it died,  
Her secret wish to it confide.  
If she met, all unaware,  
A black-cowled monk, or if a hare  
Crossed her path, in panicked flight,  
And fled through the fields, that too  
Left her uncertain what to do...  
In her confusion she'd take fright,  
With sad expectancy would wait  
For some malignant blow of fate.

7.

Yet she found a secret charm,  
(Since, fond of contradiction, Nature,  
Melds fascination with alarm)  
Even in the midst of terror.  
Christmas comes, joys unfold,  
The fortunes of the young are told;  
For careless youth's without regret,  
And life's horizons broad as yet,  
While age, in spectacles, can see  
Its fate in death's gaping portal,  
Knowing all our joy is mortal,  
And life a transient mystery:  
No matter, hope in childish guise  
Beguiles, with its seductive lies.

8.

Now Tanya stares in fascination  
Watching the molten wax assume,  
Shapes where her own imagination,  
Finds delight to come, or doom;  
Then from a dish, rings are taken,  
Lifted from the water, shaken,  
While the girls recite old rhymes,  
As for Tanya this one chimes:  
*'Peasants there in riches wallow,  
Shovelling silver with a spade,  
We sing those who, fortunes made,  
Live in glory...ah, but sorrow*  
Is where that fair song is heading:  
Girls prefer *The Kitten's Wedding*.

9.

A frosty night: the sky is clear,  
The glittering stars, their endless trains,  
Move in their harmonious sphere...  
Tatyana the pale garden gains,  
And, heedless of the cold, she turns  
A mirror on the moon, but learns  
Nothing from that darkened glass,  
Seeing its sad face tremble, pass...  
The crunch of snow...someone goes by;  
She rushes to him, on tiptoe,  
Her voice tender, sweet and low,  
Like a reed-pipe, pure, her sigh:  
‘*What is your name?*’ He moves on,  
His rustic answer: ‘Agafon’.

10.

Taking her nurse’s fond advice,  
For fortune-telling they prepare  
And in the bath-house, in a trice  
A table’s readied for the pair;  
But she takes fright, my Tatyana,  
While Zhukovsky’s Svetlana  
I too recall....ah, not for me,  
This fortune-telling, I’ll let be.  
Instead we see, her sash untied,  
Tatyana takes herself to bed,  
The love-god, Lel, overhead  
Hovers, still these girls will hide  
A mirror underneath the pillow,  
Tanya sleeps, at peace below.

11.

But wonders come to her in dreams:  
She wanders through a snowy vale  
Wrapped in mist and gloom, it seems  
Hidden from the world: while pale,  
Among the snowdrifts, roars  
A seething torrent, foaming, pours  
Into the shadows, still the same,  
A thing the winter cannot tame;  
Two slender boughs glued by ice,  
Stretched across to form a bridge,  
A delicate and trembling ridge,  
To make a passer-by think twice:  
And in deep perplexity,  
There she stands, helplessly.

12.

As if before some mournful parting,  
She sorrows at the dark divide;  
No one is there, beyond its seething,  
To lead her to the other side;  
A snowdrift shifts, a shaggy bear,  
Rises from his hidden lair,  
Tatyana screams! ...She hears a roar,  
He offers her a long curved claw,  
To help her cross, she gathers strength  
And putting out a trembling hand  
Lets him draw her to dry land,  
Along the fragile bridge's length.  
She stumbles on – and yet, beware,  
She's followed closely by the bear!

13.

She dare not stop, or look behind,  
She quickens her despairing pace,  
There's no escape, in her sad mind,  
From that dark forbidding face;  
She plunges on, he grunts and follows,  
Far into the silent hollows;  
Here's a wood: in beauty, pines  
Meet the sky in sombre lines,  
Their branches, as she stumbles on,  
Heaped with snow; glittering there  
Birch, and lime, and aspen bare,  
With starlit crowns; the track is gone;  
All the world seems lost in sleep,  
Drowned in snow, and buried deep.

14.

Through the wood she flees the bear;  
The soft snow reaches to her knee;  
A branch leans down to snag her hair,  
And scratch her neck, and stubbornly  
Pluck the gold earrings from her ears;  
And then one wet shoe disappears  
Covered by the powdery snow;  
Her handkerchief is next to go;  
No time to retrieve it, in her fright,  
The creature once again is near;  
She dare not, in her shame and fear,  
Lift her trailing hem, in flight;  
She runs, he follows, on and on,  
Until her strength is all but gone.

15.

She falls to the snow, the bear alert  
Rushes to lift her, swiftly sheathing  
His sharp claws, she lies inert,  
In his grasp, and barely breathing;  
Now along the track he crashes,  
Here's a hut, to which he dashes,  
Trees crowd round; it's drowned in snow,  
One window yields a rosy glow,  
From inside there's noise and clatter;  
The bear speaks: 'Friends live here,  
Come in, warm yourself, my dear,  
Ignore the tumult and the chatter';  
He pushes through the open door,  
And sets her down upon the floor.

16.

She recovers, gazes round,  
The bear has gone; she's in a hall;  
Behind a door cheers resound,  
Cries, the clash of glasses, all  
The clamour of a wake; unsure,  
She finds a spy-hole in the door,  
And, there? .....Around a table sit  
A monstrous crew, imagine it!  
One has a horned and doglike face;  
One a cockerel's head; and see  
A frightful witch with a goatee;  
A skeleton haughtily in place;  
A dwarf who sports a tail; and that,  
Seems half a heron, half a cat!

17.

And stranger still, behold a spider  
Sits a crayfish; wonderful,  
In red night-cap, a second rider  
Mounts a goose's neck, a skull!  
A windmill dances a wild jig,  
Its sails a creaking whirligig;  
Bark, laugh, whistle, sing and screech,  
Horses' hooves and human speech!  
Then in the crowd inside that hovel,  
Our poor Tatyana recognises,  
The one she fears and idolises –  
Who but the hero of our novel?  
Onegin drinks amidst the roar,  
Glancing stealthily at the door.

18.

He nods – and there's a mighty shout;  
He drinks – the creatures howl and swill,  
He laughs – and they all fall about,  
He frowns – and everyone is still;  
It's plain that he's the master here,  
Tanya recovers from her fear,  
And curious as young girls are,  
Pushes the door till it's ajar...  
But suddenly a draught of air  
Agitates the candle-flames;  
Among them all, confusion reigns,  
With glittering eyes Onegin there  
Clatters his chair against the floor;  
All rise; he rushes to the door.

19.

Filled with terror, see her try  
To flee the place; She cannot move,  
The greater her attempts to fly,  
The less of use her efforts prove.  
Eugene flings wide the door, reveals  
Her to that hellish crew – and peals  
Of raucous laughter swell; all eyes,  
Turn to her; and every guise,  
Of horn and hoof and crooked snout,  
Fang and tusk and blood-stained jaw,  
Beard, tufted tail, sharp gleaming claw,  
And bony finger, point her out;  
And all their voices now combine  
To cry aloud: ‘She’s mine, she’s mine!’

20.

‘Mine’, Yevgeny’s voice rings out,  
The wild host vanishes from sight,  
And leaves them in the gloomy light  
Alone together, at his shout.  
Onegin quietly carries her  
To a frail bed in a corner, there,  
On her shoulder leans his head;  
When suddenly they’re visited,  
By Olga and her lover Lensky.  
Light flashes; Eugene lifts his arm,  
As if to raise a magic charm  
Against intruders; furiously,  
Contests their entry in a breath;  
Tanya lies there, cold as death.

21.

Yevgeny swiftly grasps a knife,  
Louder and louder grows the quarrel,  
Then Lensky falls, robbed of life,  
The shadows thicken, till a dreadful  
Scream rings out...the cabin shakes...  
And Tanya, full of terror, wakes...!  
She gazes round; the room grows light;  
The dawn is breaking, crimson, bright,  
Through the frosted glass, and then  
The door flies open, Olga's there,  
Light as a swallow, and as fair  
And rosy as Aurora when  
She lights the North: 'Now, tell me true,  
Whom did your dream reveal to you?'

22.

But Tanya, seeming not to hear,  
Seizes a book, with rapt attention  
Turns its leaves, no word or tear;  
Yet the book has no pretension  
To yield poetic inspiration,  
Compelling truth, or illustration,  
Though Racine, or Seneca  
Virgil, Byron, Walter Scott,  
Even the fashion page, could not  
Enthral like Martin Zadeka,  
Diviner, and Chaldean sage,  
Reader of dreams to the age.

23.

A wandering pedlar had brought  
This deep and learned opus to her,  
A prize which Tatyana bought  
Along with Cottin's work *Malvina*,  
Dog-eared, with the cover bare,  
The price three-fifty for the pair,  
Though in exchange he took as well,  
Volume Three of Marmontel  
(Those *Memoirs*), and two *Petriads*  
(Our dear Lomonosov), a grammar,  
Fables: Zadeka though was better;  
In every sorrow that she had,  
He was her solace and delight,  
Sharing her pillow every night.

24.

Her dream is deeply worrying her,  
Not knowing what it signifies,  
She makes him her interpreter,  
Seeking its meaning from the wise.  
A clue the index may afford her,  
Laid out in alphabetic order:  
Bear, bridge, darkness, fir and forest  
Snout, snow, storm, warlock, and the rest.  
But her mounting trepidation  
Martin Zedeka can't allay,  
Her nightmare seeming to portray,  
Endless future tribulation.  
For several days thereafter she  
Is troubled by its mystery.

25.

But now, from out the vales of morning  
Aurora, rosy-fingered, brings  
The new-born sun, the day is dawning,  
Tanya's birthday, filled with greetings,  
As neighbouring families arrive,  
And clog the Larin's steps and drive,  
With coaches, carriages and *britzkas*,  
Calashes, broughams, and *kibitkas*.  
The hall is crowded, shoving, pushing,  
The parlour's full of unknown faces,  
Lap dogs yapping, airs and graces,  
Young girls kissing, noise and crushing.  
Guests bow politely at the door,  
While nurses screech, and infants roar.

26.

Here, with his wife, a portly charmer,  
Pustyakov the plump arrives,  
And here's Gvozdin, squire and farmer,  
Whose serfs live miserable lives;  
The Skotinins, turning grey,  
With children of all ages, say  
From two to thirty, in a row;  
Petushkov next, the local beau;  
Then my 'cousin', Buyanov,  
In peaked cap, hair full of fluff,  
(You know the fellow, right enough);  
And the ex-councillor Flyanov,  
Inveterate gossip, old-time gangster:  
Glutton, bribe-taker, and prankster.

27.

In a red peruke and glasses,  
The Tambov wit, Monsieur Triquet,  
(With Panil Kharlikov, who passes,  
With his offspring on display)  
Always the Frenchman, had to bring  
For Tanya, a song that children sing,  
With a familiar melody:

*Réveillez-vous, belle endormie.*  
He found it in some dusty album  
Printed among the ancient airs,  
Triquet, ingenious poet, dares,  
To rescue it, as is his custom,  
Boldly replacing its *belle Nina*,  
Substituting – *belle Tatiana!*

28.

Lo, the company commander,  
From the local camp, what rapture!  
The girls' true idol, at least the older  
Ones whose Mamas plot his capture.  
He enters...ah, what news, hurray,  
The band will come: they're on their way,  
The colonel's sent them, so, a dance!  
The young girls dream, in a trance,  
Anticipating future bliss.  
But dinner's served, the couples pair,  
Go, arm in arm to table, where  
Tanya's the centre of all this.  
They cross themselves, grace is repeated,  
Then a buzz, while all are seated.

29.

There's a lull in conversation,  
While they chew. All around,  
Plates, dishes chime, in unison,  
With the glasses' clinking sound.  
The room is loud and growing louder,  
All the noise of talk and laughter;  
No one listens, they just speak,  
Hoot or argue, shout or shriek.  
The door swings open, wide it flies,  
Lensky's here, and with Onegin,  
Guests squeeze up to let them in,  
'Ah, at last!' their hostess cries,  
Places set, each finds a chair,  
And, smiling, room's made for the pair.

30.

They sit across from our Tatyana,  
She's paler than the moon at dawn,  
Lowered eyes grown clouded, darker,  
Trembling like a hunted fawn.  
With passion's fire she is blazing,  
Overwhelmed, near suffocating,  
The two friends' greeting scarcely hears,  
While her eyes are drowned in tears.  
Ready to faint, alas, poor thing,  
She shivers as if she were ill,  
But now her reason and her will,  
Revive. Two words, a whispering,  
Forced between her lips, will serve  
To greet them, and to hold her nerve.

31.

Hysteria, fainting, tragic tears,  
Had long bored Eugene to distraction,  
He hated girls' neurotic fears;  
Experienced but the one reaction.  
An awkward guest at such a feast,  
Not one to savour it in the least,  
He saw the poor girl's quivering state,  
He dropped his gaze, began to hate  
His friend for his own presence there,  
And swore in deepening irritation,  
To rouse his friend to indignation,  
Repay him: and with joyful stare,  
A caricature he next designed  
Of every guest there, in his mind.

32.

Our Yevgeny was not alone  
In noting Tanya's distress,  
But all eyes were turned, I own,  
On a rich pie (its saltiness,  
Alas, excessive) and the wine,  
Smoky bottles, tarred with twine,  
To separate blancmange from roast,  
A Tsimlyansky, for a toast;  
And glasses, tall, with narrow waist,  
Like yours my darling, made to hold,  
Zizi, the crystal of my soul,  
Object of my verses chaste:  
Ever Love's most alluring vial,  
You've intoxicated me in style!

33.

Freed now of its dampened cork,  
A bottle pops; the wine now flows  
Fizzing, and amidst the talk,  
As verse inside him burns and glows,  
Triquet rises, with noble gaze;  
The noise subsides, and faces glaze;  
Tatyana feels half-dead; Triquet,  
Turns, page in hand then sings away  
Always partly out of tune,  
To cheers, applause. Tanya now  
Is forced to curtsey to his bow.  
Though great, our poet is immune  
To pride; he's first to drink her health,  
Present his song-sheet, wish her wealth.

34.

Wishes, good health, felicity,  
Tanya replied to each with grace;  
Eugene stood there uneasily,  
Noting the pallor in her face.  
Her distress, her hidden passion,  
Stirred a flicker of compassion.  
Then he bowed to her, in silence,  
Yet revealing in his glance,  
A tenderness. Whether he meant  
His expression quite sincerely,  
Or played a part unwittingly;  
Half-jesting, or with true intent;  
His tender look still conveyed  
A meaning that her heart obeyed.

35.

The chairs scrape backwards on the floor,  
They crowd into the drawing room  
Like bees that leave the hive, and pour  
Into the meadows, in full bloom.  
But they're replete from their labour,  
Neighbour wheezes now at neighbour.  
The ladies sit beside the fire;  
The whispering girls elsewhere conspire;  
The green card-tables are in place,  
Those keenest to take part are summoned,  
For Boston, claiming the old-fashioned,  
Or whist, that's never out of grace,  
For all of that monotonous breed  
That's sired by boredom out of greed.

36.

Eight times our heroes at their whist  
Have played a rubber; and eight times  
Changed places: there, you have the gist,  
Then tea arrives. Not by the chimes  
Of clock or watch I count the hours,  
In this countryside of ours,  
But by breakfast, dinner, tea;  
Our stomachs – prompt horology.  
And I'll mention here, in passing,  
That the substance of my verse  
Will often food and drink rehearse,  
Popping corks, and idle feasting,  
That helped you earn, divine Homer,  
Your three thousand year diploma!

Tea, then: the girls take up, demurely,  
 Their steaming cups, have barely stirred,  
 When in the doorway, loudly, sweetly,  
 Flute, bassoon, are gladly heard.  
 Diverted by the welcome sound,  
 Leaving his tea and rum aground,  
 Petushkov, neighbourhood Adonis,  
 Seeks Olga's lovely hand in his;  
 Lensky, Tanya's; Kharlikova,  
 Maid of riper years, accepts  
 Triquet; Buyanov then steps  
 Off, in haste, with Pustyakova;  
 The crowd spills into the hall,  
 And all is brilliance at the ball.

40.

At the commencement of my story  
 I thought I'd paint (See Chapter One)  
 A Petersburg ball, in all its glory,  
 Yet as Albani might have done;  
 But empty fancy's vain distraction  
 Reminded me of my attraction  
 To little feet, entrancing ladies.  
 Now, no more, of ifs and maybes,  
 No more, dear feet, of wandering  
 In your traces: now youth's done,  
 No more of error and distraction,  
 Now I must take to sounder reasoning;  
 And as it ends, with this confession,  
 Free Chapter Five from more digression.

41.

Now, while predictable and mindless  
As giddy youth, the dancers fly,  
Wheeling in its circles, tireless  
Couples sweeping wildly by;  
Now is the moment of revenge,  
Onegin smiles as he extends  
His hand to Olga, leads the girl,  
Among the guests; they swiftly twirl;  
Next they sit, and talk politely,  
Speak of this and that a while;  
Then they're off again in style,  
For the waltz, and stepping lightly;  
All are watching in surprise,  
Lensky can't believe his eyes.

42.

Now, the mazurka. Long ago,  
At the mazurka, floors would quake,  
Heels pounding on the wood below,  
Enough to make the ballroom shake,  
The windows rattle in their frames.  
Not now: we like more polished games,  
Glide smoothly over lacquered boards,  
Though a provincial town affords  
A sight of the true original,  
Heels, and leaps, and long moustache,  
As some old squire cuts a dash,  
All still the same as we recall;  
No sign of the fevered tyrant, Fashion,  
That plague of every modern Russian.

43-44.

Buyanov, my lively ‘cousin’ leads  
Both the sisters, by the hand,  
To our hero, who concedes  
The dance to Olga, as he’d planned;  
He dances, nonchalantly guiding  
Her, while to her ear confiding,  
Some subtle whispered compliment,  
Presses her hand – his whole intent  
Achieved in her conceited look,  
Flushed and satisfied. Poor Lensky  
Stares, grows mad with jealousy;  
A moment: that was all it took.  
He waits till the mazurka’s done,  
And then demands the cotillion.

45.

She can’t. And why? Because she’s given  
Her word away, she’s pledged already  
To Onegin. Dear God in heaven!  
What’s this he’s hearing? Can it be...?  
Can this girl who’s scarcely yet  
Left the cradle, play flirt, coquette,  
Possess that cunning, share those vices,  
Know all love’s treacherous devices!  
Poor Lensky’s reeling from the blow.  
He curses woman’s reckless course,  
Exits, calls loudly for his horse,  
Rides off. A pair of pistols though,  
Two bullets – nothing else – await  
The hour that must decide his fate.

## **Chapter Six**

*Là sotto giorni nubilos e brevi  
Nasce una gente a cui l'morir none dole.*

**Petrarch**

*There, where days are cloudy and brief,  
Are born a people to whom death brings no pain.*

1.

Eugene, now Vladimir had left,  
Was bored again beyond all measure,  
By Olga, though yet not bereft  
Entirely of his vengeful pleasure;  
Olga too yawns by him, sadly  
Glancing round to seek her Lensky,  
Tired of this cotillion;  
This nightmare whirling, on and on.  
At last it's over, now it's supper,  
Then rooms are found for every guest,  
All glad at heart to take their rest,  
From the ground floor to the upper,  
In attic too. Eugene, instead,  
Drives home, preferring his own bed.

2.

All's peaceful; in the parlour, vying  
Snore for snore, fat Pustyakov,  
By his better half is lying.  
Gvozdin, Buyanov, Petushkov,  
And Flyanov, toss and turn on chairs,  
In the dining room downstairs;  
Triquet's slumbering on the floor,  
In shirt and night-cap, by the door;  
The girls are stowed with Tatyana,  
And with Olga, lost in dream;  
But, lighted by Diana's gleam,  
Alone and sad, my darling Tanya,  
Sleepless, at the window, stares  
At dark fields, mirroring her cares.

3.

Onegin's unexpected presence;  
His fleeting glance of tenderness;  
His partnering Olga too, what sense  
To make of that; her own distress;  
All pierced her to the core; and then  
Her failure too to comprehend;  
And jealousy, you understand,  
As if a cold, an icy hand  
Had gripped her heart, as if a black  
And seething abyss at her feet  
Had opened... 'Yet the death is sweet  
He brings' – she murmurs – 'and I lack  
Strength to complain, I confess,  
Though he can't bring me happiness.'

4.

But on, on with my story!  
A new face claims our attention.  
Five *versts* from Krasnogorye,  
Lensky's estate, worth a mention,  
There lives, and thrives no less,  
In the intellectual wilderness,  
Zaretsky, once a reprobate,  
Gambler-in-chief, an intimate  
And sage of inns, a philanderer;  
Kind and sober, now, instead,  
Father of many, still unwed;  
He, as friend in need, you'll gather,  
Even as man of honour, features:  
So our age improves us creatures!

5.

There was a time when envious faces  
Praised his sheer daring; he could hit  
An ace of clubs at twenty paces,  
And pierce the very heart of it.  
Carried away by his brave calling,  
He made his name by simply falling:  
When far ahead of his battalion,  
He toppled from his Kalmuck stallion,  
Drunk as an owl, a Frenchman's prize,  
Yet a modern Regulus, the soul  
Of honour: ready – it was his goal –  
For capture again, should that arise,  
As long as, on credit, they'd guarantee,  
Three bottles a day, for him, *chez Véry*.

6.

He was the practical joker, ever  
Prone to lead a fool about,  
By the nose; deceive the clever;  
In secret, or with raucous shout;  
Though he'd occasionally misfire  
And end, himself, in the mire,  
As much the victim of his fun,  
As any passing simpleton.  
He liked debate, to point a moral,  
Make a blunt or sharp retort,  
At times be silent, then in sport  
Cunningly begin a quarrel,  
Incite two friends of his to fight,  
A duel in the morning light,

7.

Or force them to be reconciled,  
And earn a luncheon with them both;  
Though privately they'd be reviled,  
With cruel joke, or lying oath!  
*Sed alia tempora!* With the rest,  
(Like love's young dream, another jest)  
Such things belong to youth, now dead.  
For my Zaretsky, as I said,  
Found refuge from the storm of life,  
Beneath his cherries and acacias,  
Like Horace, peaceful and sagacious,  
Plants cabbages, and free from strife,  
Breeds ducks and geese, while at his knee  
The children learn their ABC.

8.

He was no fool; appreciated  
By Yevgeny not for his heart  
But for his wit, which he rated,  
Finding him sensible, yet smart.  
In the past quite frequently  
He'd called, was pleasant company;  
So morning brought no great surprise  
When Zaretsky met his eyes.  
Yet, after brief greeting, to begin  
The visit, a note he proffered,  
Penned by Lensky, and as he offered  
The missive gave a caustic grin:  
Onegin, without more ado,  
At the window, read it through.

9.

Politely, without indecision,  
In as brief a *cartel* as was right,  
Lensky, coolly, with precision,  
Had merely challenged him to fight.  
Onegin without hesitating,  
Turned to the envoy, mutely waiting,  
And spoke as if he scarcely cared,  
What might result: '*Ever prepared.*'  
At this Zaretsky promptly rose,  
Not needing to prolong his stay,  
Now anxious to be on his way,  
And brought the visit to a close;  
Yet left Eugene, alone, dismayed,  
Unhappy with the role he'd played.

10.

And rightly so: For sitting sternly  
In private judgement on his action,  
He condemned himself severely:  
First: he'd erred in his reaction  
To a love both shy and tender,  
Mocked what true hearts engender;  
Second: the poet might be a fool,  
But then at eighteen that's the rule;  
While, holding him in such affection,  
Yevgeny should have shown control,  
And played a wholly different role,  
Not, blown in every direction,  
Go seeking quarrels, take offence,  
Not as a man of honour, sense.

11.

He might have spoken openly,  
Instead of bristling from the start,  
Endeared himself more readily  
To Lensky's young, receptive heart.  
'But now, too late: the moment's past...  
Besides' – he thought – 'the die is cast,  
Since that old duellist is vicious,  
A trouble-maker, and malicious;  
True, contempt should rightly answer  
All spiteful gossip, yet his tools  
Will slyly whisper, grinning fools...'  
And then such things are like a cancer!  
For it's our idol, honour's mainspring,  
Opinion, keeps the whole world turning!

12.

At home, impatient, breathing fire,  
The poet awaits Eugene's reply:  
Here comes Zaretsky, colour higher,  
With solemn look, and sparkling eye.  
Now jealousy shows its delight!  
He'd feared lest his opponent might  
By slight of hand, or by some jest,  
Make an escape, shield his breast  
From the avenging bullet; now,  
Doubt is over, they will fight,  
Beside the mill, and at first light,  
As soon as daybreak will allow,  
Cock their pistols, and let fly,  
To hit the head, or break a thigh.

13.

Resolved to hate the false, the fickle,  
Lensky, blazing with resentment,  
Keen to avoid her, before the duel,  
Checked the sun, his watch – and went!  
Abandoning all true discretion,  
He rode in his lover's direction;  
Olga he thought would be dismayed;  
At the unexpected move he'd made,  
But no! – Down the steps, as ever,  
Swiftly, she flew to meet him,  
Light as air, ran to greet him,  
Buoyant as hope, that soars forever;  
In the same lively, carefree way  
As she might on any other day.

14.

‘Why did you leave so early,’ Olga  
Asks him, ‘yesterday? Disturbed,  
Silent, he bows his head before her,  
In confusion, thoughts perturbed.  
Jealousy gone, and anger's blaze,  
Faced with her open, tender gaze,  
Faced with her sweet simplicity,  
Faced with her soul's bright clarity! ...  
He sees, his heart filled with emotion,  
At once he's tortured by remorse,  
Sees he is loved, feels the force  
Of pure regret, his only notion  
To be forgiven; trembles; mute;  
His happiness rare, and absolute.

15-17.

Now full of grief he lacks the strength  
To speak about the night before,  
Or to examine her at length,  
But broods on what he must ignore:  
'Yet', he reflects, 'I must save her',  
Not allow that coarse seducer,  
With sighs or flattery, to aspire  
To tempt her with his base desire.  
The vile and venomous worm  
Shall not attack the lily flower,  
The bud of life's fairest hour,  
Shall not fade before its term.'  
Which translates as: he intends  
To see Onegin dead, my friends.

18.

If he had known what agony  
Burned in my dear Tanya's heart!  
Had Tanya had the power to see  
The future by some magic art,  
Aware that Lensky and Eugene,  
Would meet in the morning, keen  
To dispute the entrance to the grave –  
Love might have found a way to save  
Them both, but no one knew her mind,  
No one had divined her passion,  
Onegin was silent, in his fashion,  
And Tanya alone, in secret, pined;  
Perhaps her nurse, if she'd been blessed,  
With quicker wits, might have guessed.

19.

All evening Lensky was distracted,  
Now cheerful, now full of gloom;  
As servants of the Muse have acted,  
Since time began; so, he'd resume  
His seat at the clavichord,  
Then play a note or two before,  
Turning his troubled gaze on Olga  
'I'm happy, am I not?' he'd whisper.  
It's late; and time for him to take  
His leave, his heart crushed, once more,  
He turns to go, and at the door,  
It seems to him that it must break,  
She gazes earnestly: 'What's wrong?'  
'Nothing,' he answers, and is gone.

20.

At home, his pistols are inspected  
Then replaced, their case shut tight;  
He undresses; a book's selected,  
Schiller, to scan by candlelight.  
His sad heart prevents all rest,  
By a single thought oppressed:  
He seems to see his Olga, bright  
In all her beauty, in the night.  
Vladimir shuts the book once more,  
Then poetry flows from his pen,  
Full of love's foolishness, again  
Verse sounds, as he strides the floor,  
Like that by Delvig's muse created,  
At dinner, when intoxicated.

21.

By chance, I have the lines, unfinished,  
They're here before me, his in truth:  
‘Where, oh where have you vanished,  
Golden springtime of my youth?  
This day to come, what will it bring?  
My eyes in vain seek out the thing  
That's veiled in deepest mystery.  
No matter: a just fate awaits me.  
Whether I fall struck by the power  
Of its arrow, or death wings by,  
All is well: our moments fly,  
Sleep and waking have their hour,  
Blessed the day of toil and care,  
Blessed the tomb's darkness there.’

22.

‘The morning star will tremble bright,  
Then the shining day will dawn,  
And I – perhaps, far from the light,  
Will know the secrets of death's bourn;  
Lethe will drown all memory  
Of the poet, this world forget me,  
But you, the beautiful, and dear,  
Will you not stop to shed a tear  
Over my urn, and think: “He loved,  
And in the fierce storm and strife,  
All the sad morning of his life,  
By me alone his soul was moved!”...?  
Friend of my heart, eternal friend,  
Come to me, come: yours, to the end!...’

23.

His vein then was *dark* and *languid*,  
(The Romantic style, or so they say,  
Though I fail to see what's romantic  
In it: no matter, that's by the way).  
At last near dawn, his weary head  
Nodding, he laid it down instead  
On the page, on the word *ideal*,  
One with a fashionable feel.  
He slept at last, but fitfully,  
Yet sleep had barely laid its claim  
On him, when he heard his name,  
Called by his neighbour, forcefully.  
‘Up now, and no procrastinating:  
Past six, Onegin will be waiting.’

24.

But he's in error; our Yevgeny  
Is sleeping soundly: in the yard,  
The night's shadows thinning swiftly,  
The cock-crow hails the morning star;  
Onegin slumbers on regardless.  
The sun now dispels the darkness,  
A brief snow-flurry spirals by,  
Eugene continues to lie  
In blissful sleep, it's certain,  
The winged god hovers overhead.  
At last he stirs, sits up in bed  
And pulls aside the curtain;  
Looks out, noting it is day,  
And high time to be on his way.

25.

Hastily he rings; the servant,  
Guillot, his French valet, appears;  
Slippers, dressing-gown: this instant;  
Fresh linen: take time by the ears;  
Then Onegin swiftly dresses,  
Orders Guillot, since time presses,  
To ready himself, have all in place,  
And not forget the pistol-case.  
The sledge is waiting, at the door,  
He's in, and flying to the mill.  
Arrived, asks Guillot if he will  
Carry the weapons, as before,  
(*Lepage's* make, of course) and tie  
The horses to the oak nearby.

26.

Leaning on the dam-wall, Lensky,  
Resolute, impatient, waited,  
While, quite the engineer, Zaretsky,  
Surveyed it, and pontificated.  
Eugene came to apologise,  
'But where on earth,' with surprise,  
Zaretsky asked, 'is your second?'  
In matters of duelling reckoned  
A classicist, and pedant both,  
He'd not allow a man to die  
Just anyhow and let him lie,  
But by rule, and he was loath  
To deviate from established ways  
(A predilection we should praise).

27.

‘My second?’ – echoes Yevgeny:  
He’s here, my friend, Monsieur Guillot.  
That can’t be a problem, surely  
Not? Besides I’d have you know,  
Though he is unknown to you,  
He is a man of honour too.’  
Zaretsky bites his lip, crossly,  
While Onegin turns to Lensky:  
‘Shall we begin?’ ‘Begin, why not?’  
Vladimir replies. They start  
Behind the mill, while there, apart,  
Zaretsky establishes what’s what  
With the *man of honour*, and sighs;  
The opponents wait, with downcast eyes.

28.

Opponents! They’d not long been parted  
By this cruel thirst to kill each other.  
Not long before, tender-hearted,  
Each had acted like a brother,  
Sharing pleasures, meals, and thought.  
Now hostility had brought  
On nightmare, like those ancient feuds  
Where in cold blood opposing broods,  
In silence, plan each other’s slaughter.  
Could they not speak and smile again,  
Before blood left its scarlet stain,  
Part in kindness, giving quarter? ...  
But the world’s scornful expectation  
Breeds fear of reconciliation.

29.

Pistols gleam, hammers are knocked  
On ramrods, and they grate together,  
Bullets are loaded, weapons cocked,  
Into the pans they sift the powder,  
The jagged flints once firmly seated,  
Are raised again, the work's completed.  
Behind the stump of a nearby tree  
Poor Guillot stands, uneasily,  
While Zaretsky measures nicely,  
– The duellists remove their cloaks,  
Here's an end to all their jokes –  
Thirty two paces, precisely.  
Each with a pistol in his hand,  
Opposite his friend must stand.

30.

‘Now, approach!’ Calm and steady,  
Not yet attempting to aim,  
They've taken four steps already,  
Four fatal steps, to kill or maim.  
Yevgeny, silently advances,  
Raises his pistol slowly, glances;  
Five more paces now they take;  
Lensky, keen to avoid mistake,  
Squints, half-closes his left eye,  
A few steps from eternity,  
Takes aim now – when, suddenly,  
Onegin fires...the clock on high  
Strikes for the poet, at the sound,  
His weapon spirals to the ground.

31.

Pressing his hand to his heart,  
Lightly, he falls. His gaze betrays  
Not pain, but death. So, at the start,  
On a steep slope, in the sun's rays,  
A block of snow will slowly glide,  
Then gather momentum in its slide.  
Struck by an icy chill, Onegin  
Runs to his friend, gazes at him,  
Calls out his name...uselessly:  
He's lost: the votary of rhyme,  
Has met his fate before his time,  
The storm is done, and cruelly,  
The flower has faded from the bough,  
The altar-fire's extinguished now.

32.

Motionless, like one dreaming,  
Strange his languor, there, at rest;  
Blood from his wound is streaming,  
The bullet shattering his chest.  
A moment since, imagination  
Had fired this heart, pure inspiration,  
Hope and love and enmity,  
A pulse, the blood's living heat,  
Now like some deserted place,  
All is silent, shuttered, still,  
Windows pale within, that fill  
With shadows all its gloomy space,  
The lady of the manse has fled.  
Where to? God knows. The trail is dead.

33.

It's pleasant with a sharp remark  
To infuriate your enemy,  
Pleasant to see it hit the mark,  
As he lowers horns, stubbornly,  
To see, unwillingly, as they pass,  
His own features in the glass;  
More pleasant still, if he should cry,  
My friends, in bending: 'It is I!'  
But the pleasantest thing of all  
Is to aim at his pallid face  
Across a gentlemanly space,  
And anticipate his funeral.  
Yet, should you succeed, beware,  
There's very little pleasure there.

34.

What if your pistol-shot inflicts  
A fatal wound on some young friend,  
Whose rash look or sneer conflicts  
With your self-image? He may offend  
With some nonsense while your drinking,  
Issue an angry challenge, thinking  
He ought to do so – will your soul  
Summon sufficient self-control  
To watch him lying on the ground,  
In his face the pains of death,  
Hearing his last failing breath,  
Stiffening, as his friends stand round,  
Deaf, voiceless, never to reply,  
To your heartfelt, despairing cry?

35.

Still clutching his pistol, tightly,  
Gripped by feelings of remorse,  
Eugene stares down at Lensky,  
‘Well?’ says Zaretsky, with force.  
‘Killed!’ ... And with that stark reply,  
Onegin shudders, turns, gives a cry  
Summons the servant for assistance;  
Then, at Zaretsky’s insistence,  
They lift the cold body to its bier,  
Placing it carefully in the sleigh,  
Then carry the dread thing away.  
The horses scent the dead, and rear,  
Steel bits and traces flecked with foam,  
As they fly like arrows towards home.

36.

Friends, for the poet now you sorrow,  
Killed before his promise bloomed,  
Forced to forgo that sweet tomorrow,  
Prematurely blighted, doomed!  
Where now are the burning passions,  
Those high aims ambition fashions,  
That pure emotion youth may render,  
Thoughts and feelings, noble, tender?  
Where is the storm of love’s extremes,  
That thirst for truth, toil’s midnight flame,  
The fear of error, and of shame,  
And you, the bright celestial dreams,  
You, phantoms born of reverie,  
You, gleams of sacred poetry?

37.

Perhaps for glory he was created,  
Or to ease the world's condition,  
Perhaps that lyre, to silence fated,  
Might have achieved its high mission,  
Echoing down the years. The poet  
Might have climbed Parnassus yet  
Found his place, or, martyred shade,  
Into the dark may have conveyed  
The holy secret, lost forever,  
The power of some life-giving voice  
To make the soul of man rejoice,  
One that, beyond the grave, never  
A hymn can reach, or people's praise,  
Or gratitude from age to age.

38-39.

Or alternatively the poet  
Might have met the usual fate,  
Youth slipped by, years to forget,  
The soul's fire cooling of late.  
The Muse he might well have deserted,  
Settled, to married life converted,  
Deep in the country, far from town,  
Worn horns, and a dressing-gown;  
And learned life's bland reality:  
At forty suffer from the gout,  
Eat, drink, yawn; ill, and stout,  
Then prove his own mortality,  
Midst swarms of children, lie in bed,  
Doctors, and weeping women, dead!

Whatever the future might have brought,  
Reader, alas, that tender lover,  
Young poet of meditative thought,  
Fell at a friend's hand! You'll discover,  
As you leave the village, a place  
That inspired soul knew, a space  
Where the roots are intertwined  
Of two tall pines; where waters wind  
Towards the valley down below;  
Where the ploughman likes to take  
His rest; girl reapers, keen to slake  
Their thirst, clink pitchers in the flow;  
Where, above shadowy waters blent,  
There stands a simple monument.

41.

Nearby (when the furrows ooze  
With the springtime showers again)  
The shepherd, weaving his bast shoes,  
Sings of the Volga fishermen;  
And the young city lady, down  
For the summer, bored with town,  
Racing the meadowlands alone  
Will halt her horse beside the stone,  
Grip the reins, and from her hair  
Lifting the gauzy veil may glance  
Lightly at the lines, by chance,  
Of its inscription, feel pity there,  
On reading their sad tale – surprise  
A haze of tears to cloud her eyes.

42.

Then, across the fields, slowly,  
Brooding silently, she'll ride,  
Lost in the depths of reverie,  
With Lensky's fate pre-occupied;  
'And then what became of Olga?  
Did she pine for him?' She'll wonder;  
'Or did her sorrow vanish swiftly?  
And what of her sister, where is she?  
And that fugitive from the world,  
The smart coquettes' smart enemy,  
The gloomy eccentric, where is he,  
Who to his grave the poet hurled?  
All in good time, trust me, I'll try  
To supply the details, by and by.

43.

But not quite yet. Although I dearly  
Love my hero, as before,  
And promise you, most sincerely,  
I'll return to him: no more!  
Age demands prose for a time,  
Age drives away the urchin, rhyme.  
And I –with a sigh, I confess –  
I now enjoy composing less.  
Now, I no longer rush to stain  
Scattered reams with flying quill,  
Another dream, and one more chill,  
Another care, profounder pain,  
In the world's noise, or solitude,  
On my troubled mind intrude.

44.

I've learnt to know another longing,  
I've learnt the sadness of tomorrow,  
In yesterday there is no trusting;  
And I lament my former sorrow.  
The dream! Where's sweet elusive truth?  
And you (its rhyme forever) *youth*?  
Can it be true, that crown at last  
Is now quite withered by the blast?  
Can it be true, and not a mere  
Conceit of elegiac verse,  
(That I'd once happily rehearse)  
My springtime's over, in the sere?  
Can it be true there's no return?  
And thirty years the prize I earn?

45.

Pale afternoon is here, my heart,  
Confess it now, behold: the truth.  
Then so be it: in friendship part,  
Oh my frivolous lost youth!  
My thanks for every sweet refrain,  
The torments of the soul, the pain,  
The noise, the tempests, and the feast,  
For all your gifts, even the least,  
My thanks. I took my joy, and more...  
Lived you to the full, in riot,  
Or in solitude, and quiet;  
Enough! Again, my soul is pure;  
I travel another road, at last,  
Freed from the burdens of the past.

46.

Backward, I glance. Farewell the glade,  
Where days flowed by so lazily,  
Filled with sweet passion, pensive shade,  
Long hours of idle reverie!  
And you, my youthful inspiration,  
Find fresh powers; Imagination,  
Rouse the dull mind from sleep,  
Visit my humble corner, keep  
The poet's soul from every ill,  
Let it not wither, harsh and dry,  
Or worse still, freeze and petrify,  
In society's toils that kill,  
The muddy pool, my friends, that we  
Immerse in, so relentlessly!

## **Chapter Seven**

*Moscow, Russia's darling daughter,  
Where shall we find your like?*

**Dimitriev**

*How can we not love our Moscow?*

**Baratynsky**

*Scorn Moscow? Is the world so marvellous?  
Where could be better? – Where there are none of us!*

**Griboyedov**

1.

From the neighbouring hills, the snow  
Driven by the springtime sun,  
Flows in turbid streams that run  
Down to the flooded fields below.  
Nature wakes from dream, lightly,  
Greets the new season, brightly.  
A brilliant azure lights the sky,  
And still transparent to the eye  
The naked woods show downy green.  
Out of its waxen cell, the bee  
Goes to raid nature's treasury.  
The valleys show a dappled sheen;  
The cattle low; a nightingale,  
In night's deep silence, tells its tale.

2.

And yet how sad you seem to me,  
Spring, ah Spring! The time of love!  
With what strange languid agony,  
You fill my soul, and my blood!  
How heavy the emotion weighing  
On my heart, to feel the straying  
Breath of spring caress my face,  
In some peaceful rural place!  
Are all such things quite alien  
To me – joyous things that shine,  
All that is glad, lives, never mine –  
Bringing boredom, anguish, then,  
To a soul that perished long ago;  
And all this world dark below?

3.

Or un-consoled by the return  
Of leaves that vanished in the fall,  
Do we recall those doomed to burn,  
Hearing fresh whispers sigh and call?  
Or finding Nature re-awaken,  
Our past forever dead, forsaken,  
Perhaps the troubled soul remembers  
Years long gone, now faded embers?  
Or some poetic reverie  
A memory to the mind may bring  
Of another, older spring,  
And, in the aching heart, set free  
Dreams of a country, lost too soon,  
O magic night, enchanted moon...

4.

It's time, you inveterate idlers,  
Whom Epicurean maxims rule,  
You fortunate philosophers,  
You acolytes of Levshin's school,  
You rustic Priams, elemental,  
And all you ladies sentimental –  
Spring calls you to the fertile soil,  
Warmth, growth and outdoor toil,  
And to those seductive nights,  
Long walks, and fresh inspiration,  
To the fields, my friends! Run, run!  
In coaches, burdensome or light,  
Drawn by post-horses, or your own,  
Forgo the city's ceaseless drone.

5.

And you, my dear indulgent reader,  
In foreign gig that you employ,  
Flee the metropolis, its bother,  
That all last winter gave you joy;  
Join me and my capricious Muse,  
And listen to the forest news,  
Beside that nameless river shore,  
That our Yevgeny found a bore,  
And where he spent those icy days,  
As a recluse, idle, gloomy,  
Near young Tatyana, whom we  
Know lives in a dreamy haze;  
Where he's no longer to be found,  
Though sad echoes still resound.

6.

Deep in the hill-encircled valley,  
We'll take the trail towards the stream,  
Through meadows, down a lime-tree alley,  
To where the silent shallows gleam,  
Where the nightingale, spring's lover,  
Sings all night, wild roses cover  
Bank and brake, sweet waters flow –  
Where two shadowy pine trees grow,  
The passer-by can read the legend  
On the stone, with his own eyes  
'Here, young Vladimir Lensky lies,  
Who met with an untimely end,  
At such and such a date, and age;  
Rest, poet, from your pilgrimage.'

7.

On a pine-branch bending there  
Over the simple urn below,  
When morning breezes filled the air,  
A wreath once swayed to and fro.  
And dark beneath the branches' cover,  
Their arms entwined about each other,  
Two girls, when the moon shone clear,  
Would haunt the grave, and shed a tear.  
Today...no wreath hangs on the bough,  
The woodland path is overgrown,  
The tale forgotten and the stone;  
Only the shepherd, aged now,  
Sits there as he's accustomed to,  
And sings, and plaits a lime-bark shoe.

8-10.

Poor Lenksy! Not for long did Olga  
Pine for you, and mourn your fate!  
Alas! Young girls are faithless ever,  
The dove will soon forget its mate.  
Another captured her attention,  
Another star had its ascension,  
Flattery soon soothed her pain,  
A Lancer, who was loved again,  
A Lancer, with undying devotion...  
Soon, beneath the bridal crown,  
At the altar, head bowed down,  
She stands, blushing with emotion,  
Lowered eyes their gleams eclipse,  
While a soft smile adorns her lips.

11.

Poor Lensky! In the grave's far bourn,  
Beyond the voiceless boundary,  
Did the singer sadly mourn  
His knowledge of her frailty?  
Or by Lethe blissfully  
In deep forgetfulness, does he  
Sleep soundly, in oblivion,  
The world to him both sealed and dumb? ...  
So be it! Neutral nothingness  
Awaits us all, at the end,  
Voice of lover, foe and friend,  
Falls silent. Only heir, heiress,  
Are heard, perverse, insatiate,  
Quarrelling over our estate.

12.

And soon our Olga's chiming voice  
Was heard at the Larin's no more:  
Back to his regiment, her choice  
Must go, a slave to army law.  
The old mother, broken-hearted,  
Wept for her daughter; as they parted  
It seemed she could barely breathe;  
Yet Tanya scarcely seemed to grieve;  
Only a strange sad pallor clouded  
Her face, like one about to die.  
When on the porch they said goodbye,  
Kissed, and fussed about, and crowded  
Round the carriage, she was there,  
To say her farewells to the pair.

13.

And for a long while Tanya stood  
Eyes misted, as they sped away...  
Alone, alone it seemed for good!  
Alas! Her friend of many a day,  
Her confidante, her own sweet dove,  
The ally she was born to love,  
Is carried far from her by fate,  
Forever now, they separate.  
She wanders, purposeless, a shade,  
Gazes at the empty garden,  
Seeing nothing there to gladden,  
No solace in the silent glade:  
By melancholy tears oppressed,  
Her aching heart can find no rest.

14.

Now, in her cruel isolation,  
Her silent passion's more intense,  
Onegin, in this desolation,  
Far off, invades her every sense.  
She knows she must not see him, ever  
That she should hate him now forever,  
The murderer of their dear friend;  
The poet is no more...the end  
Of all, oblivion; this too,  
His darling to another wed;  
All memory of him swiftly fled  
Like smoke dispersing in the blue;  
Two hearts there are, two that grieve  
Perhaps, for him...And yet, why grieve?

15.

Dusk falls. The sky is dark. The river  
Quietly flows. The beetle drones.  
The rural dancers now retire  
From the field, with hushed tones.  
On the far bank, the smoky flare,  
A fisherman's fire: Tanya there,  
Alone, where the meadow gleams  
In the silvery moonlight, dreams,  
Walks on forever: on and on.  
Then from the heights she sees  
A village, a house among the trees,  
A glittering stream beside a garden!  
She gazes – feels a throbbing start,  
While faster, stronger pounds her heart.

16.

She hesitates, is filled with doubt:  
‘Should I turn back now, or go on? ...  
I'm not known; he's not about...  
Why not view the house, or garden?  
So scarcely breathing, she descends  
The hill slope and where it ends  
Looks about her...fate has brought  
Her to the wide deserted court:  
The dogs run towards her, barking,  
But swiftly, at her nervous cry,  
From the yard the serf-boys fly,  
A noisy crowd; and fighting, larking,  
Drive the dogs off, to ensure  
That Tanya can reach the door.

17.

‘Could I, perhaps, just see inside?’  
Tatyana asks: And instantly  
The lads run to find a guide:  
‘Where’s Anisya with the key?’  
The old crone comes at their call,  
Ushers Tanya through the hall,  
Echoing in its emptiness:  
Our hero’s previous address.  
She gazes: a discarded cue  
Lies on the billiard table’s top,  
On the divan, a riding-crop.  
The housekeeper nods her through:  
‘By the fireplace, there’s his chair,  
The master often brooded there.’

18.

‘And here with our neighbour, Lensky,  
Before the young man’s death, he’d dine,  
In winter-time. Please, follow me:  
Here’s his study, he’d recline  
On that very couch, and rest;  
Sip coffee; or at his request  
The steward came; he’d read a book...  
See here too, my old master’s nook;  
He’d sit here of a Sunday,  
Don his spectacles to see  
The cards, and play whist with me,  
By that window: now I pray  
His soul’s at peace, his bones at rest:  
That they by Mother Earth are blessed!

19.

Tatyana with deep emotion,  
Gazes, painfully, around her;  
Each object is, to her notion,  
A priceless treasure, here to stir  
The soul with torment and delight;  
The desk with its shaded light,  
The pile of books, then the bed  
With a Persian fabric spread,  
The twilit view beyond the glass,  
The clouded moon, and on the wall  
Lord Byron's portrait, by a small  
Cast-iron statue which they pass,  
Napoleon, arms crossed, with that  
Wide gloomy brow and bicorn hat.

20.

In this fashionable monk's cell,  
Tatyana lingers: she's spell-bound.  
But it grows late; the wind as well  
Blows chill; the sleeping groves, around  
The darkened river, vapours fill;  
The moon is hidden by a hill;  
And as for our young votaress,  
It's time to leave. Feigning calmness,  
Our Tanya, not without a sigh,  
Departs the room, yet asks Anisya  
If she might return to see her,  
And, if permitted, by and by,  
Though the house is empty, use  
That room to sit in, read, and muse.

21.

She parts then, from the housekeeper,  
At the gate, says her goodbyes,  
Yet at dawn the restless sleeper  
Wakes, and to the house she flies.  
Lost in her own deep reverie,  
Enters the study silently,  
Oblivious of the world around her,  
She weeps. The books surround her,  
And at long last claim attention,  
Though, in her indifference,  
At first they make but little sense,  
Then, intrigued by the collection,  
She samples them, and as if called  
To an unknown world's enthralled.

22.

Onegin's love for books, we know,  
Had vanished long ago, and yet  
Among the many doomed to go  
There were some favourites he kept;  
Poet of the *Giaour* and *Don Juan*,  
Byron was there – and novels, one  
Or two, the age drawn with élan,  
A profile of contemporary man  
Penned with unerring accuracy,  
A creature heartless and amoral;  
His spirit egotistical,  
And lost in endless reverie;  
An embittered mind that seethes  
With vain ideas the brain conceives.

23.

On many pages could be seen  
The imprint of his fingernail,  
And Tanya all attention, keen  
To follow him, pursued the trail,  
Trembling too, with her intent,  
To see what fresh enlightenment,  
Eugene had found, with what word  
He'd agreed, what found absurd.  
In the margins where, with care,  
He'd made pencil marks, his soul  
Was revealed, recorded whole,  
Unconsciously, apparent there:  
Now an underline; now a dark  
Comment; now a question-mark.

24.

And so my Tanya began  
– Thank God – bit by bit, to learn  
His nature, comprehend the man,  
For whom her heart was made to burn,  
By fate's implacable decree.  
That sad and dangerous mystery,  
Was he from Heaven or from Hell,  
A devil in pride, or yet an angel,  
Which was he? Mere imitation,  
An empty phantom, or a joke,  
A Muscovite in *Childe Harold's* cloak,  
A poor second-hand illustration,  
A fashionable glossary,  
A lexicon, a parody?

25.

Had she solved the conundrum,  
Had she found the *word* at last?  
The clock runs swiftly on and on,  
The guests have come, the hour is past,  
At home they're already waiting,  
She's the subject they're debating:  
'What's to be done? She's not a child.'  
Her mother's scarcely reconciled:  
'Olga's younger, yet she's wed,  
Tanya should be married too.  
But what on earth is one to do?  
She turns them all down, instead  
It's: "I won't." Then on her own  
She'll brood, or roam the woods alone.'

26.

'She's not in love then?' 'Tell me who!  
Buyanov's asked her: she refused.  
And Petushkov – spurned him too.  
That Hussar, Pykhtin, she confused,  
He was quite infatuated,  
Flattered her, smiled, ingratiated  
Himself! I thought: "He's the one,"  
But no! Not a bit of it, he's gone.' –  
'You must widen the net, my dear.  
Moscow's a better market-place!  
The setting for a pretty face.' –  
'But oh, the expense, not like here!' –  
'You could afford a winter season,  
Come, borrow from me, within reason.'

27.

Her mother always valued greatly  
Advice both sensible and sound.  
The accounts were done, and swiftly  
Funds for a Moscow winter found.  
Tanya had news of the decision.  
To face society's derision,  
Present the clearest evidence  
Of shy provincial innocence,  
Of fashions always out of date,  
Of simple speech and rural ways  
And let the proud and mocking gaze  
Of beaus and Circes speak her fate! ...  
Oh, horror! Better safely hidden  
Deep in the woods, than do as bidden.

28.

Rising with the morning light,  
She rushes to the open fields,  
Her sad eyes tearful and bright,  
And to deep emotion yields:  
'Farewell, you valleys, peaceful, dear,  
You too, familiar hills, I fear;  
And you, familiar woods I love,  
Farewell beauty of skies above;  
Farewell nature, my joy, adieu;  
I leave such quiet haunts as these  
For a noisy world of vanities...  
Farewell to you, my freedom, too!  
And why? What am I striving for?  
What future does fate hold in store?'

29.

All her daily walks grow longer,  
There is a stream, and here a hill,  
That with sheer beauty charms Tatyana  
Arresting her against her will.  
Seeking their charms she goes to meet  
The groves and meadows at her feet,  
And speaks to them, as to old friends.  
Yet all too soon the summer ends,  
And here is autumn golden-browed,  
Then nature trembles, deathly pale,  
A victim, decked out for the gale...  
And now the north wind drives the cloud,  
Blows and howls – and presently,  
The Enchantress, Winter: here is she!

30.

Scattering herself abroad, she flies,  
Whitening the oak boughs, and fills  
With her carpet, billowing where it lies,  
The meadows and the slopes of hills;  
Levels the borders of the stream,  
Covered with sheets of downy gleam;  
The frost glitters. We give thanks,  
Welcome with joy the winter's pranks.  
But Tanya's spirit is unmoved,  
Indifferent to wintry delights;  
Breathing the frosted air of nights;  
Washing, with fresh snow, removed  
From the roof, face, shoulders, breast.  
By winter her mute heart's oppressed.

31.

The long-delayed departure day  
Is here at last, the journey planned,  
The sledded coaches, stored away,  
Re-upholstered, there they stand,  
Three large *kibitkas*, by tradition.  
Their loads are placed in position;  
Chairs, chests, and watering-cans,  
Jars of jam, and frying-pans,  
Featherbeds, cockerels in cages,  
Pots and basins, jugs; the kind  
Of things none dare leave behind;  
Then the servant's noise presages  
Loud farewells, with many a tear;  
And eighteen nags now appear.

32.

They're harnessed to the master's sleighs,  
While the breakfast is preparing,  
The load on each *kibitka* sways,  
Wenches and coachmen swearing;  
The bearded outrider's astride  
His nag: it's ill, it nearly died.  
The servants gather by the gate,  
To call a last farewell: it's late;  
The ladies seated; then away:  
'Farewell now, you haunts of peace,  
Farewell, lonely sanctuaries.'  
In procession, sleigh by sleigh.  
'Is this forever', sadly cries  
Tatyana, with tear-stained eyes.

33.

When progress and enlightenment  
Have had sufficient time to act  
(And philosophic sentiment  
Now estimates we need, in fact,  
A mere five hundred years) our roads  
Will be improved to take such loads:  
Russia will be one great highway,  
Unifying every by-way.  
Cast-iron spans will leap the river,  
And stride in arches every way,  
We'll move the mountains, and pay  
To drive bold tunnels underwater,  
And godly folk will institute,  
Fine inns too, all along the route.

34.

But as it is, our roads are bad;  
Our neglected bridges crumble,  
The fleas at halts drive you mad,  
Force you to lie awake, and mumble.  
Inns, there are none. In some hut,  
Freezing cold, a menu's put  
Before you, simply to excite,  
In vain, your growing appetite;  
Meanwhile the village Cyclops toils,  
Slowly, by his slumbering fire,  
With Russian hammer, he'll aspire  
To mend Europe's dainty coils,  
Blessing Russia's ruts and ditches  
Made by sorcerers and witches.

Yet in frozen winter time  
Travel's easy, a delight;  
Like modern verse, our empty rhyme,  
The roads are smooth, the burden light.  
So lively are our charioteers,  
Our *troikas* fit to run for years,  
The mile-markers soothe the eye,  
Like fence-posts swiftly flashing by.  
But then Larina crawled along;  
To avoid the usual expense  
Of post-horses, it made sense  
To use their nags, and so prolong  
The tedious halts that, with delays,  
The journey took them seven days.

36.

Yet now they're near. Before them lies  
White Moscow, stone and blazing fire  
Where cupolas raise to glowing skies  
Their golden crosses, lifted higher.  
Ah, friends! How often joyous, too,  
I suddenly beheld that view,  
Of park and palace, spire and dome,  
With all its mysteries of home.  
How often, dumb with separation,  
In my nomadic exile, then,  
Moscow, I dreamed of you again!  
Moscow....what depths of fascination  
Live in that name, what echoes start,  
And sound in every Russian heart!

37.

Surrounded by its ancient trees  
There the Petrovsky palace rises,  
Proud, in its glorious memories,  
For here, elated by the prizes  
Fate had granted, Napoleon,  
Waited on Moscow's submission,  
Crawling to him on her knees,  
To offer up the Kremlin keys.  
But there was no capitulation,  
My Moscow chose not to bow;  
No gift, no feast she gave him now,  
Only a mighty conflagration.  
From here, plunged in thought, he saw  
The threatening flames skyward soar.

38.

Proud witness of that fallen glory,  
Farewell! No lingering here,  
Drive on! And, to resume our story,  
The city gates gleam white; they're near;  
Then down Tverskaya Street they bump,  
Stalls flash by, and urchins jump,  
Lamp-posts, mansions, monasteries,  
Kitchen-gardens, balconies,  
Sleighs and shacks and boulevards,  
Cossacks, Bokharans, merchants,  
Pharmacies, towers, and peasants,  
Fashionable shops, and yards,  
Lions on gates, with frozen roars,  
And church-crosses black with daws.

39-40.

This whole exhausting journey takes  
Two hours at least, but then, once past,  
St Chariton's, the carriage brakes;  
A gateway in a lane: at last!  
They've come to an old aunt who's ailing  
Consumptive, four years past, and failing.  
A Kalmuck, in a ragged smock,  
Flings wide the door, he holds a sock  
He darns, old spectacles adorn  
His face, the princess, in the parlour,  
Calls her welcome from the sofa;  
Her plight indeed is most forlorn;  
The two old women weep, embrace,  
Then rattle on at lightening pace.

41.

'Princess, *mon ange*' – 'Pachette!' – 'Alina!'  
'Who'd have though it?' – 'What an age!  
Darling, how long can you stay here?' –  
– 'Dear Cousin!' – 'Sit: it's like a page  
From a novel, yet here you are...!' –  
'And this is my own Tatyana.' –  
'Ah, Tanya, dear! Come, let me see –  
Cousin, it's like a dream to me...  
Do you recall your Grandison?' –  
'My Grandison? ...Oh, Grandison! Yes!  
Where is he, now?' 'You'll never guess,  
In Moscow, he's near St Simeon,  
He visited at Christmas...Oh!  
His son was wed not long ago,'

42.

‘And *he*...but we’ve time tomorrow  
For all of that now, have we not?  
We’ll show off Tanya, a pity though  
I can’t go out: my legs they’re what  
Betray me, while you poor thing  
Must be worn out with travelling;  
Oh, I’ve no strength...it’s my chest...  
We both should take a little rest...  
It’s all too much such happiness,  
And as for trouble...well, I’m done for,  
No use it seems, any more:  
Old age is pain and wretchedness...’  
With that her weary voice gave out;  
She wept, endured a coughing bout.

43.

The invalid’s kind words must fill  
Tanya with gratitude, and yet  
She finds all unfamiliar, still,  
Her former room she can’t forget.  
Behind the strange bed’s silken drapes,  
She lies for hours, while sleep escapes  
Her eyes: the bell towers chime,  
And wake her many and many a time,  
Calling Moscow to its labours;  
Seated by the window pane  
As the shadows slowly wane,  
No fields prove to be her neighbours,  
But only a yard, strange, immense,  
Stables, kitchens, and a fence.

44.

They dine out at the relatives  
Every day, both near and far;  
Despite the pallor languor gives,  
Grandmamma and grandpapa  
Welcome her with open arms,  
With exclamations at her charms,  
Greet her enthusiastically,  
With copious hospitality.  
'How Tanya's grown! Your christening  
Last year was it? I dandled you!  
And boxed you ears, a time or two!  
And fed you cake!' Tanya's barely listening  
To the old dears' perennial cry:  
'Goodness how the years speed by!'

45.

But none of them have changed a bit,  
They keep to their habitual ways:  
There's Princess Helena's tulle bonnet,  
The one she wore in former days;  
Powder-white Lukerya Lvovna;  
A liar yet, Lubov Petrovna;  
Ivan Petrovich, none the wiser;  
Semyon Petrovitch, still the miser;  
With Aunt Pelageya Nikolevna  
Her same friend Monsieur Finemouche,  
The same husband, the same pooch,  
Her spouse the club's most loyal member,  
As meek, as deaf, who, nothing new,  
Still eats and drinks enough for two.

46.

Their daughters offer their embraces,  
Then gaze at Tanya, silently,  
They, dear Moscow's living graces,  
Survey provincial mystery;  
They find her strange, somewhat affected,  
Unfashionable, but that's expected,  
A little pale and thin, but all  
In all, not unacceptable,  
And soon reveal their better nature,  
Invite her home, too, in the end,  
Squeeze her hand, kiss their friend,  
Fluff her hair to suit, dear creature,  
And in a sing-song voice confide,  
Some girlish secret that they hide.

47.

Tell of their conquests, others' too,  
Their hopes, their pranks, their reveries;  
The guileless stories, not a few  
Embellished by their jealousies.  
And then demand an expression  
Of her own heartfelt confession,  
In exchange, her hopes and fears;  
But Tatyana, scarcely hears  
Dreaming, understanding nothing,  
Guarding with unconscious art  
The deepest secret of her heart,  
The joy and pain she's cherishing,  
Hoardings her treasure silently,  
Concealing its reality.

48.

The chatter, and the conversation,  
She feels are things she should share,  
But drawing-room pre-occupation  
With vulgar tales is coarse and bare.  
All is so pale and colourless,  
Even their slanders meaningless,  
Their questions pointless, dry and dull;  
Stale gossip, news, of that they're full,  
But never a fresh thought all day,  
Not even just by accident,  
Not even a joke half-innocent,  
Lights the mind with its bright ray,  
Not even plain idiocy redeems,  
Their empty world, or so it seems.

49.

Fashionable Record Office clerks,  
Quite rarefied, review my Tanya,  
Comparing notes, like circling sharks,  
And pass sarcastic judgement on her.  
One melancholy jester leaning  
In the doorway, idly preening,  
Finds her *Ideal*, and fitfully  
Rhymes her, in an elegy.  
Once calling on an aunt, the bored  
Prince Vyazemsky sat beside her,  
Was for a while her entertainer;  
And an old man whom she'd ignored  
Asked her name, straightened his wig,  
And gave his neighbour's ribs a dig.

50.

And there, where bold Melpomene,  
Wailing aloud her tragic part,  
Waves her mantle, somewhat tawdry,  
Grants an indifferent crowd her art;  
Where Thalia is quietly napping,  
Heedless of their friendly clapping;  
Where only fair Terpsichore,  
Awakes a young man's loyalty,  
(As was the case in times gone by,  
Our days of youth, now past and done)  
No lorgnettes were trained upon  
Our Tanya, no discerning eye,  
No connoisseur with opera glass,  
From loge or parterre, saw her pass.

51.

She graces the Assembly Rooms:  
The crush, the stir there, and the heat.  
The blare of music, and the fumes  
Of candlelight, the dancers fleet,  
Proud beauties' in their flimsy dresses,  
The balcony, whose throng oppresses,  
Marriageable girls there, in a crescent,  
Muddling the wits of all those present.  
Here acknowledged dandies strut  
Display their vests, or form a set,  
And dangle the careless lorgnette.  
While Hussars, on leave, have but  
To show themselves, twirl, and jingle,  
Shine, conquer, and retreat, still single.

52.

The glittering night holds many a star,  
The Moscow belles are many too,  
Yet brighter shines the moon by far  
Than they, in that celestial blue.  
Yet the one whom I set higher,  
Beyond my importunate lyre,  
Like the majestic moon serene  
Among the wives and daughters seen,  
With what heavenly grace, advances,  
Touching the earth with her light feet,  
What languor fills her breast, my sweet!  
What languor's in her magic glances!...  
But enough, enough: you've paid  
The tribute that to folly's made.

53.

Noise, laughter, curtsey, bow,  
Mazurka, gallop, waltz...they dance.  
Unnoticed, Tanya seated now,  
By a pillar, between two aunts,  
Gazes unseeing at the swirl,  
Detesting all the social whirl,  
It stifles her...her spirit yearns  
For rural life, and memory turns  
To her village, despite its hovels,  
The lonely grove where a stream  
And its attendant rivulets gleam,  
Her garden, her romantic novels,  
Or the lime-tree alley's shade,  
Where *he* his visitation made.

54.

So far away her visions wander;  
The world; the ball, are left behind,  
Yet one keen gaze has settled on her,  
A General's, noble, to my mind.  
The aunts, unsure what to think,  
Nudge each other, slyly wink,  
Then poke Tatyana, whispering:  
'Look to the left, now, there's a thing.' –  
'To the left? Where? What's to see?' –  
'Never you mind that, just look...  
Two, in uniform; he hardly took  
His eyes from you...there now, quickly,  
He's walking off...he's sideways on...'  
'What that fat general?' – 'He's gone!'

55.

And now I must congratulate  
Tanya on her luck, but swiftly  
Turn to my hero, lest his fate  
Should be forgot...so, opportunely,  
I'll set a few words echoing:  
*It is of my young friend, I sing,*  
*And of his every caprice,*  
*May this, my epic, if you please,*  
*O Muse, receive your blessing now;*  
*With your staff point out the way,*  
*Lest from the chosen path I stray.*  
Enough. My shoulder's from the plough!  
I've bowed to classicism: you,  
Though late, have the *exordium* too!

## **Chapter Eight**

*Fare thee well! and if for ever,  
Still forever, fare thee well.*

**Byron**

1.

In those old Lyceum days,  
In the first bright flower of youth,  
Apuleius won my praise,  
While Cicero I loathed, in truth;  
And in spring, in hidden vales,  
Where the swan in beauty sails,  
Over waters still and clear,  
There the Muse first came near.  
Then my student cell was bright  
The Muse set my world alight,  
Sang youthful joy, and childhood dear,  
Sang Russia's glorious ages past,  
And all the dreams the heart holds fast.

2.

The world received her with a smile,  
Those first successes gave us wings;  
Derzhavin, lingering here a while  
Blessed our first poor offerings;  
Derzhavin, at the grave's dark sill,  
The noble ode's great master still;  
Derzhavin he who tuned his art  
To speak the language of the heart;  
Who mingled with some pure lament,  
On the far heights, where he strayed,  
Thoughts of fleas and lemonade;  
Yet built an eternal monument,  
Felitsa's virtues set to rhyme –  
Though we decried them, at the time.

3.

For wilful passion was my measure,  
The only law that I employed;  
Tasting the crowd's idle pleasure,  
My lively Muse and I enjoyed  
The noisy brawl, the banquet's roar,  
Taunting the watch at midnight's door;  
And to the revels and the feast,  
She brought her glories, never ceased  
To sing for the guests above the wine;  
Like a Bacchante, danced along  
Wooed by all that ardent throng,  
In that sweet golden youth of mine:  
My flighty mistress and my pride,  
The Muse was ever at my side.

4.

And when I fled that company,  
Far off...the Muse followed after.  
How often, with some secret story  
She'd divert me, or her laughter,  
On my long and silent journey;  
And in Caucasian gorges, join me,  
Like pale *Lenore*, in moonlit ride,  
Galloping onwards at my side!  
How often to the Tauric shore,  
She'd lead me in the dead of night,  
To hear the Nereids' whispers bright,  
The thundering breakers' mighty roar,  
The praise the endless tides rehearse,  
For the Father of the Universe.

5.

And far away from our great city,  
Its feasts forgotten and its speeches,  
She'd visit every spot with me,  
Of Moldavia's gloomy reaches;  
Nomadic tribes in humble tents;  
And there grew wild as they: all sense,  
The language of the gods, her songs  
Abandoned for barbaric tongues,  
Strange broken music of the steppes...  
Then all was altered, and again,  
Through my garden, once urbane  
Now a provincial girl, she steps;  
Sad-eyed there, sits on a bench,  
Clasps in her hand a book, in French.

6.

Now, for the first time, I reward  
My Muse with a grand soirée;  
And jealously the world afford  
Sight of her sweet rural display.  
Past the ranked aristocrats,  
Military dandies, diplomats,  
Then proud ladies, see her glide,  
And, seated quietly by my side,  
Admire the dense and noisy hum,  
The gleam of wit and silken dress,  
The presentation of the guests  
To the young hostess, one by one;  
The ladies framed by gentlemen,  
All, sombrely, surrounding them.

7.

She likes the orderly progression,  
The conversation of the powerful,  
Pride's cold politeness, the procession  
Of rank and age with which the hour's full.  
But who, in this select assembly,  
Is he, who lingers silently,  
And seems an utter alien here,  
To whom the passing forms appear  
As tedious phantoms? Is that spleen,  
Or tortured vanity, dark, quiescent,  
In his face? Why is he present?  
Who is the man? Is this Eugene?  
Truly? ...Yes, indeed, our hero!  
– ‘It’s long since he was here though!’

8.

‘Is he the same, or has he mellowed?  
Is he as strange now as before?  
Is it the same plan he once followed,  
He pursues, or something more,  
Or less: what role? Perhaps *Melmoth*,  
Cosmopolitan, patriot,  
*Childe Harold*, bigot, or Quaker,  
Some new work of the mask-maker,  
Or a decent fellow – you or me,  
Society, in short? What I’d advise  
Is: change your ways, if you’re wise.  
He’s fooled us far too long, and so...’  
– ‘You know him then?’ – ‘Well, yes and no.’

9.

– ‘But why berate him so severely,  
Why are you so unforgiving?  
Is it because we’re given, clearly,  
To judging other ways of living;  
Or that a fiery headstrong soul  
Is found disturbing, on the whole,  
By self-satisfied nonentity;  
Or intellect prompts mockery;  
Or we confuse deeds with chatter,  
Rewarding the merely meretricious;  
Or that the stupid are malicious;  
Or we mistake the things that matter;  
That only mediocrity  
Suits the likes of you and me?’

10.

Blessed is he, who in youth was young,  
Who only ripened in good time;  
Who, as the years went by unsung,  
Learnt to endure their colder clime;  
Who never harboured foolish fancies,  
Never scorned the world’s advances,  
In his twenties, a dandy bred,  
His thirties, profitably wed,  
At fifty tolerably debt-free,  
Obtaining wealth, and rank, and fame,  
Discarding friends to win the same;  
Achieving peace at last, and plenty;  
Of whom the age is bound to say:  
X was a fine man, anyway.

11.

Alas it's sad to think that youth  
Was granted to us all in vain,  
Hourly we betrayed its truth,  
Hourly it cheated us, again:  
Our brightest hopes, and the best,  
Our dreams, those dearer than the rest,  
Like autumn leaves, that fall and stray,  
Blown by the wind, in swift decay.  
Unbearable to see before us  
The formal dinners stretch ahead,  
Find life a ritual, dull and dead,  
Follow the bland crowd that bores us,  
Driven by its laws and fashions,  
Indifferent to its thoughts and passions.

12.

It's wretched (I trust you'll agree),  
Once scorned by the malicious,  
To be condemned impartially,  
As affected, strange and vicious,  
A melancholy oddity,  
A satanic monstrosity,  
Or else that *Demon* of my verse.  
Onegin (once more I rehearse  
His story) having killed his friend,  
Without an aim on which to fix,  
Reaching the age of twenty-six,  
Bored with leisure in the end,  
Found, without rank, career, or wife,  
Nothing to occupy his life.

13.

He was pursued by a vexatious  
Restlessness, an urge for change  
(A feeling tortuous and tenacious:  
Though some of us are born to range.)  
He left his village and his land,  
The fields, the woods, that silent stand,  
Where the mute and blood-stained shade  
Of Lensky haunted every glade;  
Began an aimless wandering,  
Stirred by a solitary emotion;  
Till travel, with its tedious motion,  
Became a bore, it seemed, unending.  
From Griboedov took *Chatzky's* cue,  
Sped back towards the ball, anew.

14.

Where now, exchanging looks, the guests  
Stir, as the murmuring swells; for lo,  
A lady approaches the hostess,  
With a large general in tow.  
Calm, her gestures unobtrusive,  
Not cold at all, yet not effusive,  
No pride, and no chilly glance,  
No pretension in her advance,  
No breath at all of haughtiness,  
No affected coquetry....  
Only serene simplicity.  
She seems the image, to excess,  
Of *comme il faut*... (Shiskov, forgive:  
I can't translate that, as I live!)

15.

The women all gathered to her;  
Dowagers smiled as she passed by;  
The men all bowed deeply to her,  
Each one tried to catch her eye;  
Young girls, hurrying, fell quiet;  
The general, flattered by the diet  
Of pure respect, followed behind,  
Chest puffed out, content in mind.  
She was no beauty, that is true,  
Yet she'd not a single trace  
In all her person, form or face,  
Of what the fashionable view,  
In London sets especially,  
Considers *vulgar*. (Pardon me...).

16.

I love the word, it's so expressive,  
And yet it's one I can't translate;  
Its use to date is not excessive,  
The honour paid it is not great;  
Though it's perfect for an epigram...).  
But back now to our theme: Madame,  
Nonchalantly, full of grace,  
At the table takes her place,  
Beside fair Nina Voronskaya,  
The Cleopatra of the Neva,  
Yet you'll agree I hope, that diva,  
Despite her beauty bright as fire,  
As dazzling as a flashing sabre,  
Cannot quite eclipse her neighbour.

17.

‘Surely it’s not’ – Yevgeny muses –  
Not she? It is though...no...and yet...  
How? From that wilderness...’ He uses,  
In agitation, his lorgnette,  
To gaze at will, in her direction,  
At one of whom his recollection  
Is merely vague, and lost in gloom.  
‘Do tell me, Prince, now, to whom,  
The Spanish ambassador, there,  
Is speaking? See, she’s wearing red.’  
The Prince, amused, turns his head,  
‘Where have you been, Onegin, where?  
I’ll introduce you. Upon my life!’ –  
‘Yes, but who *is* she? – ‘That’s my wife.’ –

18.

‘You’re married then! I’d no idea!  
How long?’ – ‘Oh, two years or so.’ –  
‘And she’s?’ – ‘A Larin, and a dear.’  
‘Tanya!’ – ‘You know her?’ – ‘Long ago,  
I was their neighbour.’ ‘Come, my friend...’  
The Prince presents him, in the end:  
A past acquaintance, and relation.  
With no apparent consternation,  
The Princess gazes at Eugene,  
And whatever stirs her soul,  
However much it takes its toll,  
Not a tremor can be seen:  
Her manner is as self-contained,  
Her nod as quiet and restrained.

19.

Truly! She didn't even shiver,  
Turn pale, or blush with distress,  
Her eyelids showed not a quiver  
Nor did her troubled lips compress.  
There was no trace to be seen,  
In that face Eugene was keen  
To gaze on, of the former Tanya;  
He'd make conversation with her,  
But – could not. She asked a question:  
Where had he come from, and when,  
From his estate, perhaps: and then  
Conveyed a hint, a mere suggestion,  
Of boredom to her spouse, was gone...  
While Eugene, frozen, lingered on.

20.

Can this really be Tatyana,  
To whom in rural solitude,  
In this same romance, earlier,  
He'd addressed a multitude  
Of noble phrases, moral too,  
Though over-zealous, it is true;  
The very girl, he'd kept her note,  
Who freely, ardently, once wrote  
Out all the content of her heart;  
That young girl...is it a dream...?  
That young girl, it would seem  
He'd scorned, for her lack of art,  
Was she the one who but now  
Revealed that calm, indifferent brow?

21.

He leaves the ball, and pensively  
Drives home again, where that night  
His dreams disturb him sadly, sweetly,  
Restless till the morning light.  
He wakes to a solicitation,  
The Prince has sent an invitation  
For that evening. ‘She’ll be there...!  
I’ll go, I’ll go’ – At once, with care,  
He pens a swift, polite reply.  
What ails him? Is it some strange coal  
Alight in his cold, torpid soul?  
What stirs there, hidden from the eye?  
Vexation? Vanity? Or, in truth,  
Can it be love, the care of youth?

22.

Onegin counts the hours, once more;  
Can scarcely wait for night to fall.  
The clock strikes ten. He's at the door;  
Flies to the house, through the hall,  
Enters the salon, with a shiver,  
And finds Tatyana, no one with her;  
There they sit, the minutes pass,  
Onegin's tongue-tied to the last,  
He hardly speaks. In his dejection,  
And awkwardness, barely replies,  
As conversation slowly dies,  
While he is lost in reflection:  
Haunted by one thought, his stare  
Meets her calm untroubled air.

23.

Enter the Prince, to interrupt  
This unrewarding *tête à tête*,  
And with a smile, and an abrupt  
Change of tone, starts to relate  
Tales from their past. The guests  
Arrive to laughter, schoolboy jests,  
Talk seasoned with the salt of malice;  
To the hostess they raise the chalice  
Of wit, froth, free of affectation,  
A sprinkling of commonsense,  
Neither pedantic nor intense,  
But merely pleasant conversation,  
And guaranteed not to alarm,  
With too much life or wit, but charm.

24.

Here was fashion's finest bloom,  
St Petersburg's high society,  
The faces seen in every room,  
The dullards we deem necessary;  
Women of a certain age,  
In bonnets, roses, all the rage,  
And a host of younger girls,  
Uncomfortable, unsmiling pearls;  
Here an ambassador conveying  
The gist of some great state affair,  
There an old head of scented hair,  
The wit of former days displaying,  
Subtle, acute, and, in a word,  
All that we now find absurd.

25.

Here, one who'd aim an epigram  
At every single thing he hated,  
At tea too sweet, banal Madame,  
At ill-bred men he deprecated,  
At some vile novel's reputation,  
At those sisters' royal decoration,  
At lies with which the press was rife,  
At the campaign, the snow, his wife.  
There a minister, out of office,  
Retired, to write undying verse,  
Tend his roses, and rehearse,  
His memoirs to an empty coppice,  
Recalling all the good he did,  
Though silent on the bad he hid.

26.

Here too was Prolasov, so stunted  
In his soul, so worthless he  
That your pencils were all blunted,  
Caricaturing him, Sen-Pri!  
A ballroom tyrant by the door  
An illustrator's dream, and more,  
A cherub, motionless, red-faced,  
Quite dumb, because so tightly-laced;  
And there a seasoned traveller,  
Over-starched and rather brazen,  
Who's affectation caused occasion  
For a swift interchange of looks,  
And question-marks in several books.

27.

Yet my Eugene's preoccupation  
Was with Tatyana, not, in truth,  
The shy, sweet girl whose adoration  
Had betrayed itself in youth,  
But the cold, aloof Princess,  
The unapproachable goddess,  
Of our proud imperial Neva.  
O Human Race! Why such a fever  
For what we see, not what is ours?  
Seduced like our ancestor Eve,  
By the serpent who'll deceive,  
Drawn to the tree, and what sours,  
Forbidden fruit before our eyes,  
Else paradise is no paradise.

28.

How changed now our Tatyana is!  
How perfectly she plays her role!  
How well she carries out the duties  
Rank demands, achieves its goal!  
Who in this calm, majestic creature,  
The power to rule, in every feature,  
Would recognise the tender girl?  
Yet he'd once set her heart awhirl!  
Then, till Morpheus brought her rest,  
She'd dream of him at dead of night,  
Gazing on the moon, its light,  
Virginal hope within her breast,  
Longing to journey, day by day,  
Humbly, with him, on life's way.

29.

To love the ages must submit;  
Yet virgin hearts, despite its pain,  
Its violent storms, are blessed by it,  
As the fields by springtime rain:  
Passion's tempests will renew,  
Bring fresh beauty to the view –  
A vital force flows from the root,  
Bringing flowers, and ripening fruit.  
But in the late and barren season,  
At the turning of the years,  
Passion's death-march brings tears:  
Autumn's gales reveal time's treason,  
Turning meadowland to marsh,  
Stripping forests, fierce and harsh.

30.

Without doubt, Eugene adores  
Tanya, like a lovesick boy;  
Subject now to passion's laws;  
Days and nights an anguished joy.  
His mind ignores all self-reproach,  
Each day he stands beside her coach,  
Follows her from door to door,  
A faithful shadow, nothing more;  
His pleasure merely to assist:  
On her shoulders, adjust the furs,  
Or with a burning hand touch hers,  
Or, as if they'd ceased to exist,  
Part liveried ranks, to bring relief,  
Make way, retrieve a handkerchief.

31.

She disregards him utterly,  
Whatever he may say or do,  
At home receives him equably,  
With guests, may speak a word or two,  
Or bow to him, make distant mention,  
Or simply pay him no attention;  
Betrays no trace of coquetry,  
So frowned on in society.  
Onegin begins to languish,  
She seems to neither see nor care,  
He's pining, with heart laid bare,  
Appears consumptive in his anguish.  
Doctors, they cry: the best by far,  
They say in turn's the nearest *spa*.

Yet he stays; readier, it appears  
To make an end, than take the waters;  
Though she's unmoved by it, no tears  
(Such is the sex, all Eve's daughters);  
But he is stubborn and persists,  
Hopes she'll warm, if he insists,  
His illness makes him more daring,  
He pens, though she seems uncaring,  
A missive that declares his passion.  
He valued such things little, rightly;  
Yet, inclined to treat them lightly,  
Was driven, in no uncertain fashion,  
To ease the pain his love incurred.  
Here is his letter, word for word.

## ONEGIN'S LETTER TO TATYANA

I foresee all: how I'll annoy  
You deeply, by my sad confession:  
What bitter scorn in your expression,  
How proud the glance you'll employ!  
What can I hope for? With what aim  
Reveal my soul, and thereafter  
Open myself to endless blame,  
Prompting your malicious laughter?

When we met, long ago, by chance,  
I dared not trust the circumstance,  
Refused to give rein to affection;  
Though seeing the tenderness in you,  
My liberty, though tedious, too,  
Demanded my full attention.  
And then, to part us utterly...  
Lensky's luckless sacrifice...  
I tore my heart away, completely  
From the heart's true paradise;  
An exile, and bound to none,  
I thought that freedom and rest  
Were substitutes for happiness.  
God! How I erred, and am undone!

No, to be with you constantly;  
Faithfully follow in your footsteps;  
And gazing in adoration see  
Your slightest glance; your smiling lips;  
To listen to you, and to know  
Your perfection in all this;  
To suffer at your feet and so  
Grow paler, and then die....what bliss!

That, I'm denied; and, simply  
For you, still drag myself about,  
Though precious time goes swiftly,  
And, in vain tedium, I play out  
These hours that fate has plotted,  
With all their weary weight allotted.  
My days are numbered, yet it's true,  
If I were certain at first light,  
By afternoon, of seeing you,  
I could endure until the night.

I fear lest this humble prayer,  
May be construed by your mind  
As some deceit the eye lays bare,  
And your reproach repay in kind.  
But if you knew this agony:  
To suffer passion's parching thirst,  
To burn – while reason forcefully  
Curbs the flames with which I'm cursed.  
To long to fall there, clasp your knees,  
In pain and sorrow, at your feet,  
Pour out complaints, confessions, pleas,  
In whatever way words can entreat –  
And yet with a pretended coldness  
To don a mask, in form and speech,  
Make conversation, and to teach  
The eye to hides its joyfulness...!

Yet so be it: here I wait:  
The fight is done, the sword is still,  
All is over: to your will  
I surrender, and my fate.

33.

There's no response. He writes another;  
He sends a second and a third,  
Still no reply, then he finds her,  
At some soirée where...not a word,  
For Eugene, falls from her lips,  
Truly his star is in eclipse!  
Alas! Her look seems to hold  
The echo of midwinter's cold!  
And indignation's icy passion,  
Flares in her face, those eyes ablaze,  
While he devours her with his gaze.  
And no confusion, no compassion?  
No mark of tears? ...No trace, no sign!  
Only what anger may define.

34.

That; and perhaps a hidden fear,  
Lest the world, her spouse, should guess  
All that Onegin knew about her...  
That folly, that past tenderness.  
All hope is lost! He leaves: a curse  
On his own madness, to immerse  
More deeply in his lunacy,  
Once more rejects society,  
And in his silent room recalls,  
A time when, pursued by spleen  
Through the fashionable scene,  
It had trapped him, like a mourner  
In the graveyard's darkest corner.

35.

He read, at random, as before;  
Browsed through Gibbon and Rousseau,  
Manzoni, Herder, and Chamfort,  
De Staël, Bichat, and Tissot;  
Read Bayle, as well, the arch-sceptic;  
Read Fontenelle. He was eclectic,  
Read, thus, sundry Russians still,  
All was as grist to his mill;  
Almanacs; and journals, too,  
Of criticism, most profound,  
Ready to praise us or to hound,  
Where I'm told I'm nothing new,  
Though once they sang my gifted pen:  
*E sempre bene*, gentlemen.

36.

What then? Though his eyes moved on,  
His thoughts were lingering elsewhere,  
Wish, dream, regret for what was gone,  
His mind a whirl, he wandered there.  
Between the lines that met his sight,  
He read, by an inner light,  
Those with other meaning. He  
Immersed his soul there, utterly:  
In mysterious legends that told  
Of deep passions, ancient, dark;  
Inconsequential dreams; the arc  
Of rumours, threats: prophetic, old;  
Some long fairytale's wild nonsense  
Or a young girl's letter, pure, intense.

37.

While reading, on both mind and feeling,  
Slumber steals, the years roll back;  
Now imagination's dealing  
Its brightly-coloured *faro* pack.  
He sees a youth there, far below,  
Asleep it seems on melting snow,  
Hears, and then his heart is chilled,  
Words echoing there: *Well* and *Killed*.  
And now, recalls past enemies,  
Malicious cowards, slanderous players,  
A swarm of beauties, cool betrayers;  
Old companions' cruelties;  
And a house – where shadows pass,  
*She* – always she, behind the glass...!

38.

Plunged endlessly in reverie,  
He almost lost his mind, indeed,  
Almost embraced pure poetry –  
Not exactly what we need!  
But through some process of osmosis,  
Magnetism or hypnosis,  
My foolish pupil now knew  
The way to turn a verse or two;  
And looked a poet, to the letter,  
In a corner, by the fire,  
Gazing at the glowing pyre,  
Softly humming: *Benedetta*  
Or *Idol mio*, till his review  
Or slipper fuelled the flames anew.

39.

The days flashed by – and with the sun  
The winter snows soon disappeared.  
A poet? No, he wasn't one,  
Nor went mad, or died, as feared.  
The spring revived him. He hastened  
To leave his place of hibernation,  
The double windows, cosy fire,  
Snug as a marmot might desire;  
And one bright morning, off he flies,  
Along the Neva in his sleigh,  
Where on blue ice-floes light-beams play,  
Along the streets where snow-melt lies,  
Grey trampled slush; yet, what's his whim?  
Where are the horses taking him?

40.

Reader, you've guessed, as I suspected,  
And know the answer to my query:  
To his Tatyana, though rejected,  
My incorrigible, never weary,  
Makes his way, with corpselike face,  
Into the lobby's empty space,  
The next room too; unoccupied,  
Another door, he flings it wide,  
And halts: what's this, before his eyes?  
The princess, in a simple dress,  
Pale, alone, and in distress;  
Her cheek rests on her hand, she cries,  
Reading a letter, silently,  
Her tears falling constantly.

41.

Who could have seen her silent pain,  
That instant, and not recognise,  
In the princess, Tanya plain:  
Poor Tanya, in her new disguise?  
In wild repentance at her feet  
Eugene lies, his fall complete;  
She shudders, silent, yet her eyes  
Show neither anger nor surprise,  
But gaze at him, as she surveys...  
His frail appearance, wasted look,  
His dumb remorse; an open book  
She sees him clear; and other days  
Return; that innocent, her dream,  
Alive again on memory's stream.

42.

She does not try to raise the man,  
Or from greedy lips, remove her  
Motionless and nerveless hand,  
Her quiet gaze does not falter.  
What passes now through her mind?  
The lengthy silence ends, refined  
And quiet her voice: 'Have done,  
Rise, now, this merits explanation.  
Eugene, do you see in memory  
That moment – how should we forget? –  
There in the garden, where we met,  
Where, held in the hands of destiny,  
You preached: the strong to the weak?  
Today, it is my turn to speak.'

43.

‘Eugene, I was so much younger,  
And prettier then, too, no doubt,  
And I loved you; ah, what answer,  
Issued from your heart’s redoubt?  
What reply? A harsh rejection.  
Is it not so? That girl’s affection,  
Was no surprise: so simple, true?  
I freeze – my God! – to think of you,  
That heartless icy look of yours,  
Lecturing me, so fiercely...yet,  
You bear no blame. I can’t forget,  
You acted rightly, in my cause,  
And played an honourable role,  
I thank you now, with all my soul...’

44.

‘Then, in that rural wasteland, far  
From the whispering tongues, allow,  
I offered little interest...ah,  
Why must you pursue me now?  
Why now pay me these attentions?  
Because, rich, noble, the conventions  
Of our world grant me honour;  
My husband’s wound, his valour,  
Make him a favourite at Court?  
And therefore my fall from grace  
Would condemn me in that place,  
And the shame dishonour brought,  
Would give you notoriety,  
In the eyes of our society?’

45.

‘I’m weeping....if you still recall  
Your poor Tanya, even now,  
Then know: I’d rather suffer all;  
That bitter anger, that cold brow;  
Were it within my power,  
Than the insults of this hour,  
Your passion, letters and your tears.  
For my dreams, my tender years  
You showed respect then...now you kneel.  
Why now? What brings you to my feet?  
What foolishness, and what complete  
Ignorance of the pain I feel!  
Can you, with such a heart and mind,  
Be so enslaved, so cruel, so blind?’

46.

‘To me Onegin all this splendour  
This tinsel of a life I hate,  
The homage rank may engender,  
This house, the soirées, my whole fate,  
What are they? I could dispense,  
In an instant, with this pretence,  
The noise, the glare, the masquerade,  
For a few books, a garden glade,  
Our old modest dwelling, where,  
So far away in time and space,  
Eugene, I first saw your face;  
For the simple churchyard there,  
The place where my poor nurse was laid  
To rest, beneath the woodland shade.’

47.

‘Then happiness seemed possible,  
So near! ...But now my destiny  
Is carved in stone, immutable.  
Perhaps I turned away too swiftly,  
But...my mother’s tears, her prayer  
That I should wed...all paths from there  
Seemed as one to poor Tatyana...  
I married. And now, you must leave her,  
I beg you, go: and you’ll defend  
I know, her honour with your own;  
Your pride; these feelings shown.  
I love you (why should I pretend?)  
And yet, I am another’s now,  
And will be faithful to my vow.’

48.

She left, yet still Eugene stood there,  
As if a lightning bolt had struck.  
His heart the tempest now stripped bare,  
And with what storms his body shook!  
But now a clink of spurs, and here  
Tatyana’s husband looms near,  
So, Reader, in that sorry state,  
I leave my hero, to his fate:  
I must abandon him for now.  
For long? ...Forever. For we,  
Have wandered far enough, for me,  
Through this wide world. We bow,  
Congratulate ourselves. Hurray!  
About time too! (I hear you say?)

49.

Reader, whoever you may be,  
Friend or foe, it matters naught,  
Let us part now amicably,  
Farewell. Whatever it was you sought,  
In this casual set of verses:  
Some wild past your heart rehearses,  
Or perhaps a pleasant rest,  
A glimpse of life, or a jest,  
Or some mistake grammatical,  
God grant you found a trifle here,  
To raise a smile, provoke a tear,  
Prompt a dream, or article;  
Something of what these stanzas tell.  
And so we part, again farewell!

50.

Farwell to my strange hero, too,  
And farewell you, my true ideal,  
And you my constant care, yes you  
My little book. In you, I feel,  
I've found all that a poet desires,  
Sweet conversation that inspires,  
A quiet retreat from the storm.  
How many days since her form,  
My Tanya's, appeared to me,  
Veiled in mist, as in a dream,  
And beside her, her Eugene –  
All their romance seen dimly  
Glowing, in a crystal sphere,  
Its free flow still dark, unclear.

51.

But of those, good friends, insistent,  
To whom the first few lines were read...  
Alas, now some are distant,  
Some are no more, as Saadi said.  
And yet my Onegin's etched.  
And she, whose lines I sketched  
For my Tatyana, long forsaken...  
Ah, what treasures Fate has taken!  
Blessed is he, who leaves the feast,  
And slips away, as chance may please,  
Before he's drained life to the lees,  
Closes the tale, before it's ceased,  
And hides it suddenly from view,  
As, my Onegin, I do you.